JIM HOLT ON THE MISINTERPRETATION OF DREAMS

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NOVEMBER 1999

THE REVIEW OF ACADEMIC LIFE

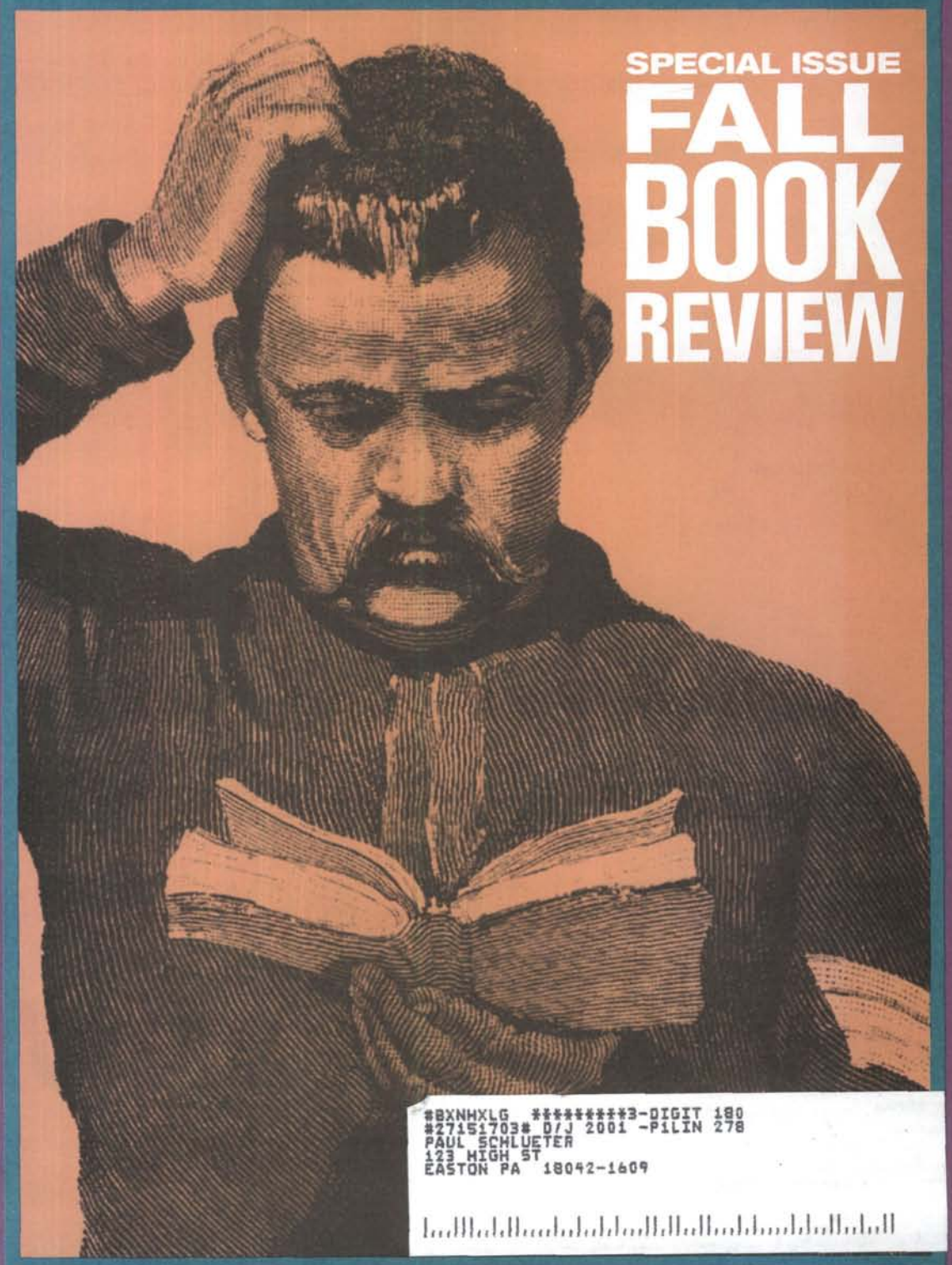
GOULD, PINKER, WILSON, OR LEWONTIN: WHO'S THE FITTEST EVOLUTIONIST?

MICHAEL MASSING ON
SIDEWALK SOCIETY

RUTH SHALIT ON THE TRANSSEXUAL
ECONOMIST

WHAT THE MAGI SAW

SERBIAN TURBOFOLK



SPECIAL ISSUE
FALL BOOK REVIEW

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There was a general fear at Mississippi State University that e-learning applications were hard to use. What changed everyone's mind? "In a word, 'WebCT'," says Anna Hillman.

"WebCT is so easy to use"

A. L. Hillman
(ALH1@ra.MsState.Edu)
Mississippi State University

"Prior to the summer of 1998, Mississippi State University (MSU) had no plan nor tools for putting courses online. There was a general fear that time commitments involved in learning HTML would be a major barrier to taking full advantage of this new medium.

"Six months later a revolution has taken place on our campus. What changed everyone's mind? In a word 'WebCT.' The single thing that stands out most about the implementation of WebCT at MSU is the speed of adoption.

"WebCT was discovered by one of our professors. After the information technology department evaluated the package, it was decided that WebCT could provide a simple, easy interface for professors who could not spare the time to learn complex HTML but who were anxious to use the web to support their courses.

"A training program for WebCT was developed for MSU faculty. We have discovered that WebCT is so easy to use that training is hardly more complex than simply demonstrating what WebCT is capable of.

"We are completely amazed at the transformation that has taken place on our campus. We attribute this change to the ease of use of WebCT and to our own training programs. We think that we have hit on a great combination for university classes and are eager to share our experiences with other institutions that might be in a position similar to where we were in July of 1998."

For the complete text of* Breaking Down the Barriers: Using Web-Based Instruction at the University Level, *by A. L. Hillman and D. M. Wells, go to www.webct.com/lingua.

Mississippi State University

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Why did a campus-wide group of faculty at the University of Georgia select WebCT over 14 other e-learning applications? "It best met UGA's needs," says Greg Ashley.

"The final vote was 31 to 1 for WebCT"

Greg Ashley, Associate Director, Consulting & Application Support, University Computing and Networking Services, University of Georgia

WebCT Selection Process at UGA

"During the summer of 1996, a committee of computer professionals on the University of Georgia campus searched the Web and a number of periodicals in search of an application to deliver Web based instructional resources to our faculty. As many as 15 applications were identified, but that number was quickly reduced to five applications for in-depth consideration. In the Spring of 1997, a campus-wide group of teaching faculty was invited to participate in the selection process. At the end of approximately four weeks of testing, we asked the participants to vote on the application that they felt best met UGA's needs. The final vote was 31 for WebCT, one for another application."

"Production began in September of 1997 and just two months later there were approximately 300 WebCT courses used by over 4,000 students. Now UGA has over 1,150 WebCT courses and 32,300 student accounts on our WebCT server.

"Also of significance is that WebCT has been selected by the Georgia University System as the application to be centrally supported for all 34 member institutions.

"Despite extensive research, we are not aware of another system that provides a better range of services, tools and support tailored to Web-based instruction as WebCT does. It is also extremely robust, dynamic and reliable which explains why WebCT is currently being used at thousands of locations around the world."

Greg Ashley's full-length paper can be found at www.webct.com/lingua.

1785

The University of Georgia

The University of Georgia is a major teaching, research and service institution with over 2,800 full-time faculty, 13 colleges and an enrollment of approximately 32,000 students.

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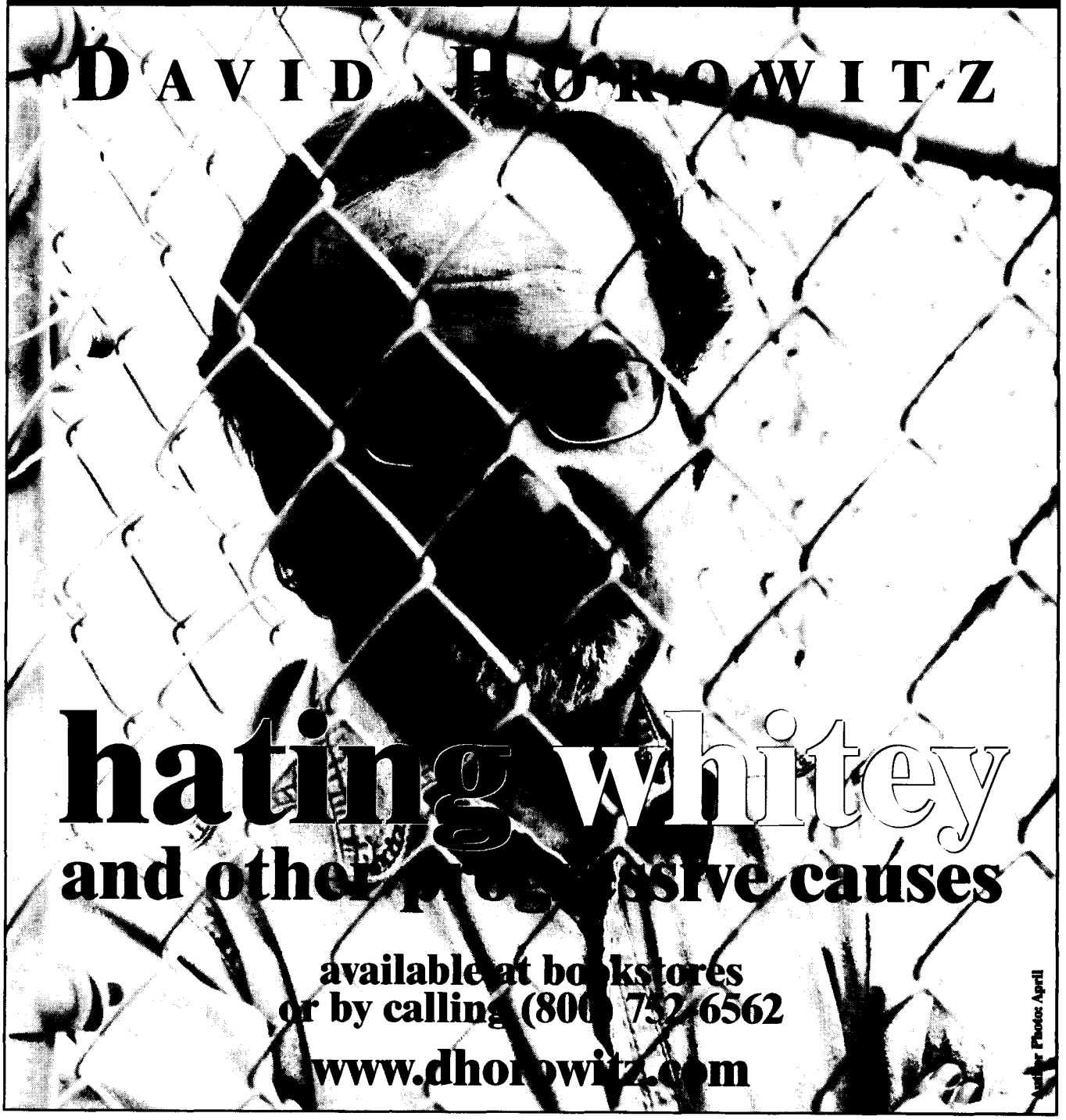
"This is a raw and courageous book that turns over some rocks and shows what is crawling underneath. It reveals the ugly reality behind the pretty and politically correct words and visions of our time."
—Thomas Sowell



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Lingua Franca THE REVIEW OF ACADEMIC LIFE
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Cambridge, Massachusetts is home to some of the country's most prominent evolutionary scientists. But that doesn't make them friends or allies. Far from it. Harvard entomologist E.O. Wilson and MIT psychologist Steven Pinker believe we owe even language and morality to gene-based natural selection. They are adamantly opposed by Harvard biologists Stephen J. Gould and Richard Lewontin, who believe that the mysteries of evolution cannot be reduced to DNA. Is Cambridge big enough for both points of view?
BY JAMES SCHWARTZ

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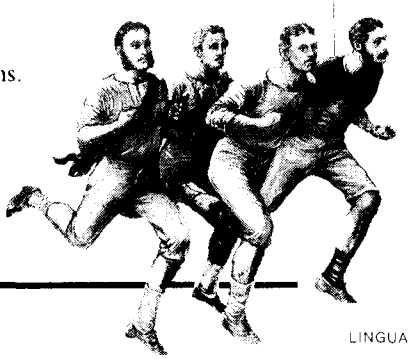

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After 18 years of teaching, she wanted to devote her time to the people who need her the most. Professors.

Meet Kathy Winograd, Ph. D. She has eighteen years of teaching experience, five of which she spent using the Internet in the classroom and teaching online. As the manager of our Instructional Design Team, she can show you what works online and what does not. She is one of the many educators at eCollege.com available to work with you.

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KOSHER CUISINE

I read with interest your account of Carol Harris-Shapiro's controversial new book on Jews for Jesus ["Kosher for Christ," Inside Publishing, September]. Could it be, I wonder, that similar excitement will attend the activities of my own organization, Kosher Goyim? We are a spiritual Christian group who believe that the mysteries of the Holy Trinity are best approached through the Jewish dietary laws, strictly observed. Our motto is: "Forgive them Father, for they know not what they eat."

Let me explain a few of our practices. In the Communion, we have of course replaced the bread and wine with knaidlach and chicken soup. From Ash Wednesday, when we put chopped liver on our foreheads, until Easter, we observe the Lenten season by eating *neither* fleishik nor milchik. On Easter itself, our children go on hunts for little baskets of gaily painted kreplach.

I sincerely hope that none of our Christian co-religionists will find offense in these practices. On the contrary, we have found they do much to strengthen our faith in Christ, although there is also an occasional touch of heartburn.

(REV.) JONATHAN GALLANT
Professor of Genetics
University of Washington

BLESSING IN DISGUISE?

I don't know from what anti-Semitic source John Dorfman got the statement that the Amidah (the central Jewish prayer, recited three times a day by Orthodox Jews) "includes a curse on apostates." The slur should not be left unanswered.

The Amidah consists of nineteen blessings, praising God for various attributes and benefactions. Only one of these praises God for punishing malefactors, essentially anti-Semites: The list includes the "arrogant," slanderers, enemies of God, and evildoers. God is praised for destroying the "Kingdom of Arrogance": For obvious reasons, that phrase was disliked by various governments, and in one version, it is toned down to the destruction of "all the arrogant." There is no mention, direct or implied, of apostates. Their return to God is welcomed, like that of other sinners, by pious Jews, and their persistence in sin is normally ignored, except when God is asked to lead the sinner to repentance.

E. BADIAN
Professor Emeritus of History
Harvard University

John Dorfman responds: E. Badian is right that the version of the Amidah in use today makes no explicit reference to apostates. However, this has not always been the case. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion,* edited by R.J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Wigoder (two eminent Jewish scholars, not anti-Semites), the twelfth blessing in the Amidah is traditionally called ***birkat ha-minim,*** which the dictionary renders as "the benediction (actually a curse) concerning ***minim*** (heretics)." The article continues, "The text has undergone many changes and revisions.... Due to various historical circumstances, including church censorship, changes were introduced in its wording." In fact, some of the most ancient texts of the benediction "include a reference to *ntsrm,* commonly identified as Jewish-Christians."

VALUE JUDGMENT

Scott McLemee's article "The Heirs of Ayn Rand" [September] doesn't come close to pinpointing what is truly problematic about Objectivism. You don't need a Ph.D. in philosophy to know that mainstream philosophy's take on values comes straight from David Hume. Values are values, facts are facts, and you can't derive values from facts.

Some philosophically literate people do not accept Hume's formulation. In their view, facts and values are not categorically distinct because, to make a long story short, the facts are never as objective as they seem. Ayn Rand and her followers also reject Hume but on the grounds that values are just as objective as facts. It

continued on page 22

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DOMINO'S DELIVERS

INTERNECINE STRIFE IS EYE-catching business. So when Father Robert Drinan, a law professor at Georgetown University and a flag bearer of sorts for American Jesuit scholarship, trained his big guns on Ave Maria, a brand-new Roman Catholic law school located in Ann Arbor, Michigan, the world of Catholic higher education was agog.

Last May, one month after plans for Ave Maria were unveiled, Drinan was taking its backers to task in the *National Catholic Reporter.* "Some in Catholic legal education deem Ave Maria an affront," he wrote. It "will almost certainly continue its boast that it is more Catholic than any other law school. It will be self-righteous.... It will mock other law schools as too secularized and, in essence, unfaithful to the magisterium." Ave Maria, his acerbic essay concluded, "will be a holier than thou institution that will deride the competition and seek to buy talent with money from its billionaire patron."

Ave Maria's rich benefactor is Thomas Monaghan, the founder of Domino's Pizza. He is a bête noire not only of pizza purists but also of feminists, who resent his penchant for giving money to antiabortion campaigns. It was the hulking specter of Monaghan's millions that led Drinan, a former congressman renowned for his liberal political views, to add that "some also think that the new school is essentially a political statement by a very conservative group of people who are utilizing Catholicism as a justification for their political convictions." It did not escape Drinan's notice that one of Ave Maria's first hires was the former judge Robert Bork, whose last book, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah,* exhibited a profound loathing for all things liberal in America.

> At Ave Maria, students will be exposed early to a course called "The Moral Foundations of Law," an important component of which will be natural law.

Dismissing Drinan's public attacks on the law school as "a little intemperate," Bernard Dobranski, who will serve as Ave Maria's dean, could barely restrain a chuckle. "America has nothing to fear from Ave Maria," he says, rejecting the notion that the school would be either "politically conservative" or "right wing." He prefers to describe it as "a place that will be emphatically part of the Catholic intellectual tradition."

A labor law specialist and former dean of the Catholic University School of Law in Washington, D.C., Dobranski explains that Ave Maria will "teach the secular subjects with a substantial similarity to all other U.S. law schools in its curriculum." The difference, he explains, is that at Ave Maria students will be encouraged to "put everything in the context of the Catholic intellectual tradition of truth and justice, with an emphasis on natural law."

Natural law is a slightly old-fashioned name for the belief that there exist timeless moral truths. It's not an idea exclusive to Catholic jurisprudence: Plato developed it first; Aristotle and Cicero embraced it later. Natural law seeped into Christian thought via Paul's Epistles to the Romans and was eventually codified by Thomas Aquinas. More recently, movements for civil disobedience have invoked natural law as the reason for their refusal to comply with the draft.

Ave Maria will not convene until the fall of 2000, but when it does, students will be exposed early to a course called "The Moral Foundations of Law," an important component of which will be natural law. The course will be co-taught by

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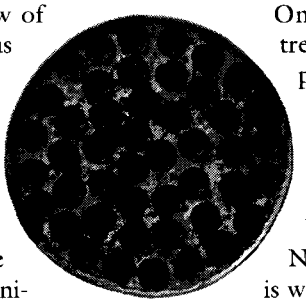
Drinan believes that Ave Maria will be a holier than thou institution that will seek to buy talent with money from its billionaire patron.

Dobranski—a passionate devotee of natural law—and Bork.

Bork says that he is looking forward to the experience. American legal scholarship, he explains, "has become heavily politicized, especially in constitutional law, where students are rarely taught from the point of view of what history *tells* us the Constitution is supposed to mean." Few will be surprised to learn that Bork believes that law schools, "like the rest of the humanities, are easy to politicize and have come under the sway of a minority of radical faculty members." Bork, who was raised Presbyterian but who now attends Catholic services with his wife, an ex-nun, admits he is "dubious about natural law." He adds: "I don't know a hell of a lot about it either. In any case, I don't think the evidence supports the view that natural law is the law written on the hearts of men by God." *Still*, he concedes diplomatically, "some extremely able people talk about it and subscribe to it, so I'm not inclined to make fun of it."



One of those extremely able people is John Finnis, a professor of law and legal philosophy at both Oxford University and Notre Dame. He is watching the Ave Maria law school with a "particularly keen interest." The world's foremost natural law theorist, Finnis said that the new law school "will do a great deal of good if it has high academic standards and a scholarly approach and provides its students with a critical framework that stops them from being the victims of the fashions of the age."

Distinguished Catholic academics sympathetic to Ave Maria point to other justifications as well. Simon Lee, the rector of Liverpool Hope University College and professor emeritus of jurisprudence at Queen's University, Belfast, says that the existing Catholic universities in America have "drifted in the same secular sort of direction as older, Protestant universities like Harvard and Yale." Lee believes that Ave Maria has "the opportunity to be an exemplar as an orthodox Catholic foundation, and the challenge this will provide to the existing Catholic law schools should be entirely healthy."

Robert George, the McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence at Princeton and a member of Ave Maria's board of governors, agrees. "We have a number of Catholic law schools already," he says, "so there's nothing wrong with asking if we really need another one. But frankly, I don't think we've reached the stage where we've got all the institutions we need. Now is a time when there's a certain identity crisis at Catholic universities." He cites the recent controversy at Georgetown over crucifixes in the classrooms. "What Ave Maria wants to do is to set up a Catholic center of scholarship that is secure in its identity as a *Catholic* institution but that is at the same time neither parochial nor in contempt of other intellectual traditions," George explains. "That's why it has my support."

For the moment, Drinan remains unconvinced. Citing the numerous Catholic law schools in the country, fourteen of which are Jesuit, he says, "Hearing the people from Ave Maria, you'd believe that the others aren't Catholic enough. Well, as you already know, I just don't buy that."

TUNKU VARADARAJAN

GEORGETOWN LAW CENTER

CODE OF MISCONDUCT

EVERY CLASS HAS ITS SLACKERS, and it isn't unusual for a few of them to be caught cheating. But Scotland's Edinburgh University made headlines this summer when it announced that *more than one-half* of the students in an undergraduate computer programming class had been nailed for plagiarizing—a grand total of 117 malefactors. Assigned to write a computer program, the guilty students had collaborated en masse, sharing one solution over email. Or so the university claimed.

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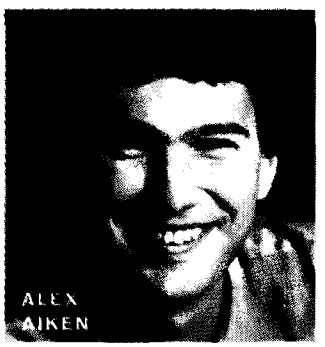
Even more unusual, perhaps, was the manner in which they were caught. The students who were accused of plagiarizing a piece of computer code were ultimately identified by, well, another piece of computer code. The anti-cheating tool is the brainchild of Alex Aiken, a professor of computer science at the University of California at Berkeley. He developed it five years ago to deal with a problem that is frequently encountered but rarely discussed: rampant cheating in computer science classes.

Grading programming assignments is different from marking English papers in one important respect: In lieu of reading the code, professors can grade the performance of the program; they can run it to see if it works. If the program functions properly, the student gets a good mark. As enrollment in computer science classes has surged over the last decade, this has become a common form of marking for many professors. But it has one fatal flaw: There's no way of telling whether the students wrote the code themselves or copied it from someone else. Borrowed code behaves the same as original code, as long as it's well written.

Indeed, though few humanities scholars realize it, there are many ways to get a computer to perform a given function—so many, according to Aiken, that "if you find a significant amount of overlap between programs, it's not an accident." Aiken figured he could devise software to determine whether lines of code were the same from program to program. (Although cheat-detection software existed, most of it was too primitive to be useful.)

In 1994 Aiken unveiled his tool: the Measure of Software Similarity (MOSS). It checks for similarities in the syntax of any two programs, comparing each student's homework with every other one in the class. (In a class of eighty students, for example, there are 3,160 possible paired combinations.) Most significantly, Aiken's code can detect similarities even if a student has tried to alter his or her code to make it look original. For example, a student might change the variables in a program—switching all the As to Xs—or change the order of procedures. By focusing on syntax, MOSS looks past such cosmetic alterations.


ALEX AIKEN

If MOSS finds enough similarity between programs, it flags them for the professor and displays the relevant sections side by side, making it easier for professors to assess whether the case amounts to plagiarism. "It reduces the time you need to evaluate an assignment from a lot of time to, really, a minute," Aiken says.

To date, MOSS has been successful—almost depressingly so. Aiken made it available for free on the Web in 1997, and 740 computer science professors worldwide have registered to use the digital sleuth. The reports from academe have been shocking: In large classes, professors found that as many as 10 percent of all assignments were plagiarized.

At the University of Maryland, the cheating was even worse. One of the first times Bill Pugh, a computer scientist, used MOSS, he caught fourteen of eighty students (17.5 percent) in an upper-level undergraduate class. "It was more than I'd anticipated," he admits with chagrin. Pugh investigated the situation in greater depth and wrote a nineteen-page report to university administrators. The students ended up receiving marks of XF for the course: "failure due to academic dishonesty."

One of MOSS's limitations is that similarities between two programs aren't themselves proof of plagiarism. What if students learn a method in class that several of them then legitimately apply in their homework? Moreover, students often discuss class assignments with each other; what if peer discussion results in the use of similar approaches? Isn't this exactly the kind of networked learning that the computer age thrives on?

Such is the dilemma at Edinburgh University. After being accused of plagiarism, the 117 students quickly fought back, setting up a Web site to proclaim their innocence. "Of the Edinburgh 117 talked to so far every one has denied that they cheated," the site declares. "All say that of course they worked with each other and of course they emailed each other and of course they shared information. But they did not cheat." In essence the students argue that plagiarism, which typically implies theft from an unwitting victim, doesn't describe their behavior. Sharing code, they suggest, is merely collaborative learning. One student has announced her intention to sue the university.

Edinburgh officials refuse to comment on the case. But Aiken argues that honest sharing is, in general, a red herring. The real issue, he says, is academic attribution. If his students can't get a small part of their assignment to work, they're free to try someone else's code, but they have to cite it. "A small piece of code," says Aiken, "that's not a big deal."

More promisingly, professors have found that MOSS has helped them map out the social architecture of cheating. As Pugh discovered, copying tends almost always to result from a small collaboration: two or three students with a similar piece of code. On the other hand, if MOSS finds a large chunk of the class has code in common, it's probably something the students learned honestly in class: common knowledge. "If more than ten students used it, then you can figure that the T.A. or the professor showed them how to do it," says Pugh, who configures his MOSS software to ignore small bits of code shared by a majority of his students.

Using Aiken's program, professors found that as many as 10 percent of all assignments were plagiarized.

Software plagiarism has another distinctive feature. In the humanities, for example, it's relatively easy to steal a short idea from someone, even if you don't fully understand it. "When you take a piece of somebody's argument and try to integrate it into your own, there may be a little bit of cognitive dissonance," says Aiken,

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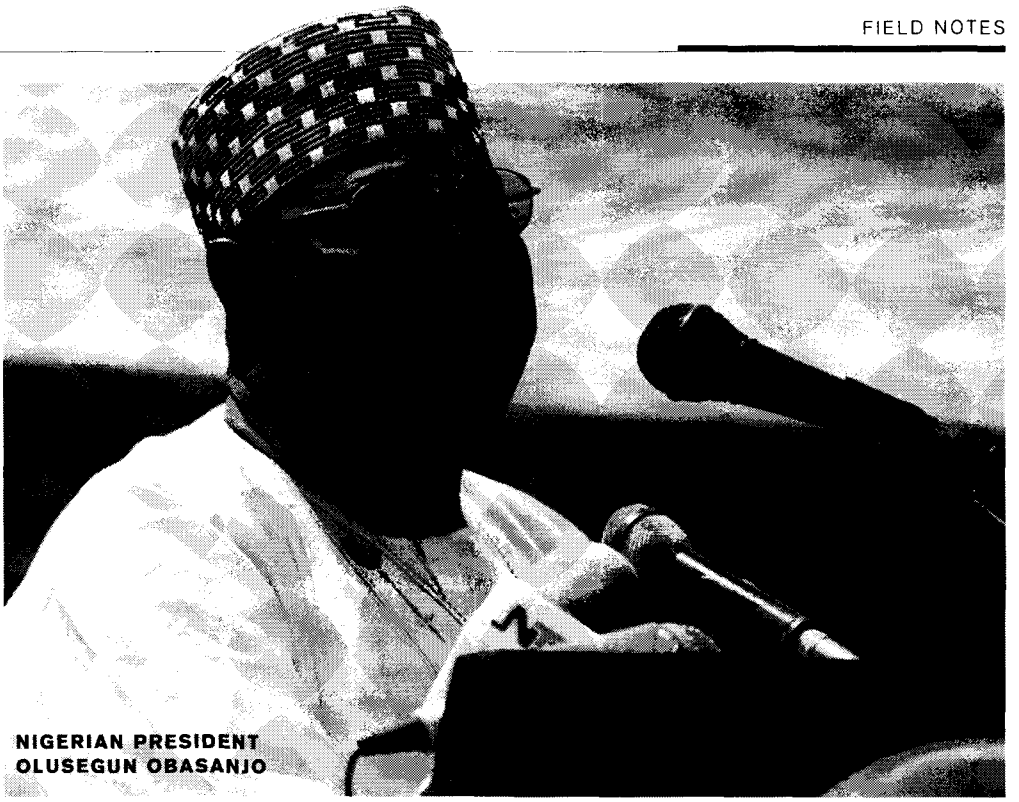
but nothing worse. But software code isn't so forgiving. If you steal a chunk, odds are it won't work with the rest of your code, because some tiny command won't translate from one segment of the program to another. Computers cannot tolerate cognitive dissonance: A faulty program will crash. To get the stolen code to function, students often have to steal more and more code until they've ripped off a sizable percentage of someone else's work.

Still, Aiken warns professors against relying solely on MOSS. Once the software has flagged a possible case of plagiarism, only good old-fashioned detective work can prove it. At Edinburgh, university officials examined email records, which they say showed that students were actively swapping code. At Maryland, Pugh examines the suspect code line by line, since copying often leaves telltale traces. The act of cutting and pasting large sections, for example, will turn an indent (a common element in programs) into a series of spaces; it will also produce an extra space at the end of a line. Pugh calls his technique "fingerprinting." "It's pretty esoteric stuff," he explains. It's also painfully time-consuming. "I'd be perfectly happy to never catch another cheater again," he says.

In many cases, though, MOSS provokes a more straightforward result, possibly the most academically satisfying one. Confronted with evidence of their cheating, Aiken's students frequently confess. "They've been feeling guilty about it but were afraid to do anything," he says with a laugh. "And they actually almost like the opportunity to come clean."

CLIVE THOMPSON



NIGERIAN PRESIDENT OLUSEGUN OBASANJO

CORBIS-BETTMANN/AFP

CLASS WARFARE

AT 4:30 A.M. ON JULY 10, LANRE Adeleke, the president of his school's student union, was startled out of sleep by gunfire outside his dorm room. Rushing into the hallway, he found a fellow student collapsed in a pool of blood. Adeleke looked up to see three marauders brandishing guns. They fired at him but missed. Adeleke managed to escape the attack, but several of his dorm mates were less fortunate: Eight students died as a result of the violence at Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) in Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

These killings are only the latest in a series of bloody events that have plunged Nigerian universities into crisis. Since the 1980s, aggressive student cults have sown death and destruction on campuses around the country. The term "cult," however, is something of a misnomer: Masked, armed, clad in red and black, and bearing names like Black Axe, Executioners, Mafia, and the Jurists, the cults resemble street gangs more than they do religious sects. Rampant within the Nigerian university system, the cults bully teachers for better grades and students for term papers, while otherwise wreaking havoc across campuses.

During Nigeria's sixteen years of corrupt military rule, cult violence was tolerated by the government, if not openly encouraged. For one thing, the cults provided a counterweight to pro-democracy student organizations. But today's Nigerian government, installed with the May 1999 inauguration of the elected President Olusegun Obasanjo, has opted for a policy of zero tolerance. Following the murders at OAU, Obasanjo has given university managers until the end of September to eradicate cult activity from their campuses—on pain of losing their jobs. He has also established a seven-man Judicial Commission of Inquiry to look into the trouble at OAU and at other state-sponsored universities. Led by a retired judge, the commission will try to finger individual perpetrators as well as measure the toll cult activities have taken in death, injury, and property damage.

So far, the government seems to be moving in the right direction. It has legalized student unions, major cult rivals that were outlawed in 1984 for their history of opposition to Nigeria's unpopular military regimes. It has also attempted to clean up OAU. The day he witnessed the killings in his dormitory, Adeleke and his peers in the university's student union held a rally calling for the dismissal

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of Wole Omole, the university's vice-chancellor. Omole, students charged, had taken no serious steps to restrain cult activity during his tenure at OAU. Some even felt that he had enlisted cults as his allies against union activity. Most seriously, a number of students suspected that through his cult connections Omole had actually ordered the execution of Adeleke and other union officials. Such allegations have yet to be substantiated. Nonetheless, Nigeria's education minister took the student union's concerns to heart, removing Omole from his post just four days after the rally.

Cults have not always been sinister forces on Nigeria's college campuses. Indeed, some evolved from traditionally fraternal groups that advocated either political and social progress or simple camaraderie. The Pyrates Confraternity, commonly called the Seadogs, can claim a rather noble pedigree: Formed in 1952 by Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka, the group aimed to promote Nigerian independence. Bernth Lindfors, a professor of English at the University of

Cults have not always been sinister forces on Nigeria's college campuses. Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka founded the Seadogs in 1952 to promote Nigerian independence.

Texas, recalls that under Soyinka the Pyrates were a "fun-loving social group that met periodically in costume—pirate garb, swords and all—to drink and socialize. It did not have a vicious or murderous side, as current campus cults in Nigeria do." These days, the Seadogs are spearheading a campaign against cult violence on campus to discuss "the issue of cultism and what to do about it."

What, then, has turned these harmless—sometimes helpful—fraternities into bloodthirsty gangs? Some observers believe the violence is attributable to the chaos, conflict, and poverty that plague Nigerian society as a whole. Under military rule, universities were underfunded and dilapidated, and many students lacked electricity and running water. Even now Nigeria's strained economy holds out little hope for the graduates' futures. Samuel B. Ayo, a visiting scholar at Indiana University's Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, has been at OAU since 1972—first as an undergraduate, then as a graduate student, and now as a professor of public administration. "The authorities don't have a grip on the students at all," Ayo remarks. The universities have failed to provide students with a sense of community or belonging. Together with Nigeria's social and economic problems, Ayo explains, that failure has given rise to the cult subculture. "Now," he says, "students have their own world, and the authorities are in the ivory tower.... There needs to be a fellowship."

To build that fellowship, current Seadog captain Ben Oguntuase recommends registering all cult groups, dragging them out from the underground, and making them visible in the same way that fraternities and sororities in the United States are with their very public Greek symbols. He has also suggested "reorientating" violent cultists with special counseling—ridding them both of the cult mentality and of any drug or alcohol habit they may have developed through cult membership.

Perhaps the most radical suggestion, however, has come from Soyinka, a man with whom Nigeria's intellectual life is often identified. "I propose that it is time to think of closing down the universities for a year or two," he told the Panafrican News Agency. "I insist that the period (of reflection and restitution) would not be a waste."

HILLARY FREY

BIG MIGRATIONS

IN JULY 1997, SIDNEY MINTZ'S colleagues in the Johns Hopkins anthropology department threw him a retirement party, a fête that honored not just his luminous career but the program's extraordinary twenty-two-year run as well. Mintz, one of the field's most respected scholars, had created the department more or less from scratch in 1975, having left Yale—together with a junior colleague, Richard Price—to found it.

Despite its small size, the Hopkins department made its mark almost immediately. It was one of the first to focus exclusively on social anthropology. Its members became known for attending to history in their work, for studying contemporary societies as well as "primitive" ones, and for unusually close collaboration with one another. Mintz and Price together helped shape current approaches to the study of Caribbean states and the Atlantic slave trade. Mintz's work *Sweetness and*

Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History (1985) is a curricular staple.

In retrospect, that 1997 party seems to have marked the end of more than just one man's career. Only two years after Mintz retired, the department has been virtually wiped

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out. All the big names—all four of the senior professors who remained when Mintz stepped down—are gone.

Former members of the department wonder if the administration could have done more to stanch the flow or if, once it was too late for that, it could have acted more quickly to rebuild. The university's dean of arts and sciences, Herbert Kessler, insists that the school remains fully committed to anthropology. He says that he is in hiring negotiations with two prominent anthropologists, whom he declines to name. Yet even if the university lands two top professors, the department will be starting more or less from square one. "This is a department that occupied a very special place in the history of anthropology in the second half of the century," says Michel-Rolph Trouillot, who left Hopkins for the University of Chicago last year. "One will feel the loss if it is not rebuilt."

Leading the most recent wave of departures was Katherine Verdery, a specialist in eastern Europe. (Price had left in 1986, followed by Emily Martin, another senior member of the department, in 1994; both of those slots were filled.) Even as Mintz was moving toward retirement, the department knew that Verdery was weighing an invitation from the University of Michigan. Among the first anthropologists to work on Europe east of the Elbe River—her books include studies of Ceasescu's Romania and of public reburials in postcommunist societies—she hungered for Michigan's rich network of area-studies centers. "As a colleague of mine put it to me," Verdery says, "You've pioneered a field; you should be at a place where you can develop it." A worrisome loss turned into a panic when Michigan followed up its offer to Verdery with another to her good friend Gillian Feeley-Harnik, who has written on both Madagascar and the cultural significance of food in early Christianity and Judaism.

Talal Asad and Trouillot, the two mainstays who remained, found themselves in a classic dilemma: Should they each stay around or flee? They hesitated...then fled. "Both of us went to see the central administration, all the way up to the president, and we asked for concrete guarantees that the university would continue to support the department," says Trouillot, the author of *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* and *Haiti: State Against Nation*. "We were not entirely satisfied." In the fall of 1998, Asad took a distinguished professorship at CUNY's graduate center, and Trouillot accepted a standing offer from Chicago.

Only two years after its founder retired, the Johns Hopkins anthropology department has been virtually wiped out.

The department did manage to bring in one new faculty member as it was disintegrating: In the summer of 1998, Gyan Pandey arrived from the history department at the University of Delhi. He struck some observers as an odd choice at such a pivotal moment, given that he was neither trained as an anthropologist nor schooled in American academic politics.

Graduate students, understandably, were deeply disturbed by the department's internal disruptions. "There was definitely a sense that the ship was sinking and we needed to grab on to anybody we could who was getting out," says Jason Antrosio, who is now writing his dissertation at Hopkins. Verdery secured money from Michigan to bring with her five Hopkins students for yearlong stints. Four students transferred outright to Michigan, one followed Trouillot to Chicago, and one accompanied Asad to CUNY. Pandey helped steady the boat in Baltimore by bringing together the remaining students, all of whom were writing their dissertations, for informal seminars. To give itself a breather, Hopkins did not admit any new graduate students last year and accepted just three this fall.

To Antrosio, the worst part of the breakup was the lost sense of intellectual community. Graduate students at Hopkins had traditionally not been affixed to a single mentor but rather worked closely with professors across the department. That academic comraderie "became untenable when people were getting offers at any given time," says Antrosio.

In August 1998, Dean Kessler convened a committee of scholars from outside Hopkins, including the anthropologists Richard G. Fox, William Hanks, and Jane Guyer, to offer advice on the department's future. Kessler concluded that hiring two major scholars is the best first move and that to attempt any more recruitments could backfire.

Kessler may be on the right track now, but administrative turnover also contributed to the turmoil in the department. From 1996 through the spring of 1998, four different men held the position of dean of arts and sciences. The interim deans may have hesitated in responding to the crisis, deferring to their successor. When Kessler finally acted, it was too late.

On a more positive note, the breakup demonstrates that a robust market exists for anthropologists in mid-career, as the older generation of Mintz, Marshall Sahlins, and Clifford Geertz retires. (Such retirements are one reason Asad and Trouillot had such tempting offers.) And it underscores how the rebuilding of the Columbia University anthropology department four years ago—when Columbia hired three professors from Michigan in one fell swoop—is still sending ripples through the discipline. As a large department, Michigan could absorb those losses far more easily than Hopkins. But its efforts to fill its empty slots have now hurt the Baltimore school.

In discussing the department he built, Mintz affects the tones of a disinterested outsider. But occasionally a note of annoyance will creep into his voice—especially when discussing Asad and Trouillot, the last two to leave, or when the pace of the university's reaction comes up. "I don't want to be mean-spirited," he says. "But two years is a long time to be waiting to make your first move."

CHRISTOPHER SHEA

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Book Review

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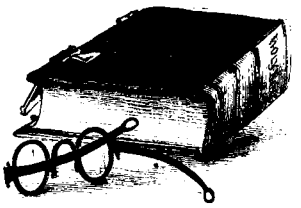

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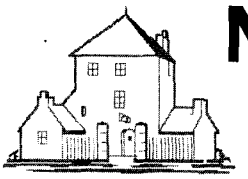

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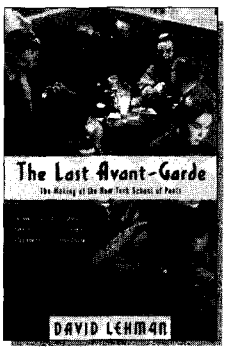

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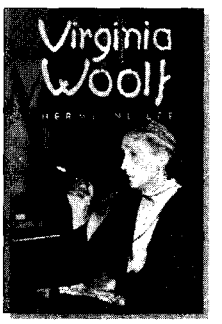

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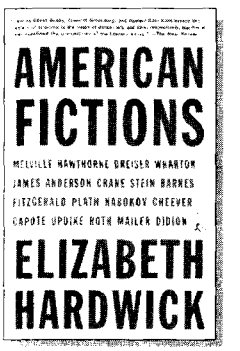

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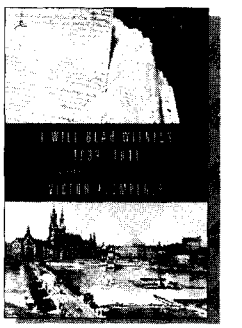

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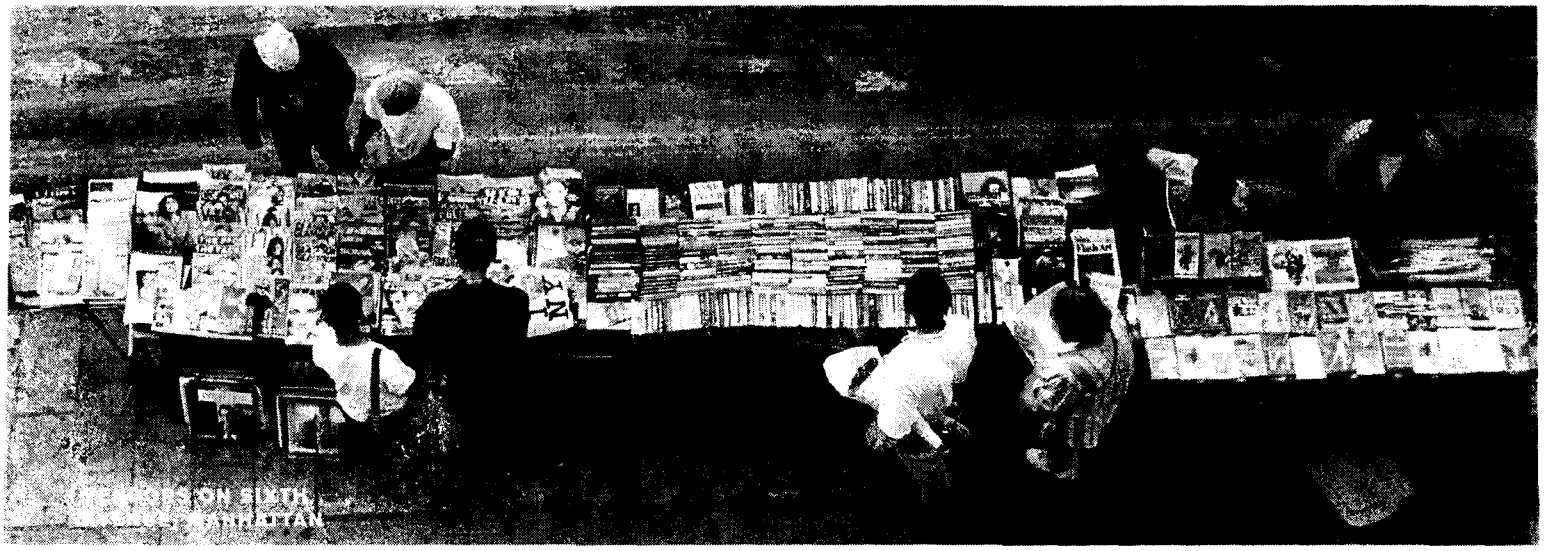
The Village People

BY MICHAEL MASSING

A FEW YEARS AGO, THE sociologist Mitchell Duneier, the author of *Slim's Table*, a study of elderly black regulars at a cafeteria in Chicago, moved to Greenwich Village. There, he became interested in the street vendors who clog the sidewalks at the intersection of Sixth Avenue and Eighth Street. The vendors, most of whom are black, sell books (everything from old paperbacks to expensive art books), used magazines (ranging from past issues of *The New Yorker* to the current Paris *Vogue*), and old clothes, appliances, and home furnishings fetched from the trash. Hanging out there, Duneier became friendly with a bookseller named Hakim Hasan. Impressed by his knowledge of books and his erudite exchanges with his customers, Duneier one day asked him how he saw his role. "I'm a public character," Hasan said. "A what?" Duneier asked. "Have you ever read Jane Jacobs's *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*?" Hasan replied. "You'll find it in there."

Duneier had read Jacobs's 1961 classic but did not recall that particular reference, so when he got home he looked it up. A public character, Jacobs had written, "is anyone who is in frequent contact with a wide circle of people and who is sufficiently interested to make himself a public character." Such an individual, she wrote, "need have no special talents or wisdom to fulfill his function.... He just needs to be present, and there need to be enough of his counterparts. His main qualification is that he *is* public, that he talks to lots of different people. In this way, news travels that is of sidewalk interest." In Jacobs's vision, public characters, by having their "eyes upon the street," help ensure its safety—a key component of her prescription for urban vitality.

Duneier was intrigued by Hasan's remark. In her book, Jacobs cited shopkeepers as quintessential public characters. She did not mention street vendors in this connection; they had a less obtrusive presence in her time. Nor did she have to contend with the homeless, unemployed, addicted men and women who today crowd our streets. These people are not generally seen as public characters. Rather, they are seen as "broken windows." This now-famous term, introduced by James Q. Wilson and George Kelling in a 1982 article in *The Atlantic Monthly*, denotes the theory of criminality that blames low-level street offenders for creating a disorderly atmosphere in which serious crime can flourish. By cracking down on minor disturbances, the theory insists, the police can help prevent larger ones. In New York City today, street vendors, along with squeegee men, drug addicts, and panhandlers, are routinely hounded and harried by the police—part of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's campaign to improve the city's quality of life.



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Sidewalk
By Mitchell Duneier
Farrar, Straus & Giroux
383 pp. • $25.00 • November

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Whereas for Jacobs it was shopkeepers who kept the peace, for Giuliani it is the police. The path from *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* to the idea of broken windows shows how the liberal urban theories of the 1960s have given way to the conservative urban strategies of the 1990s.

Those strategies made Duneier uncomfortable. While probably helping to reduce the crime rate, the "broken windows" approach to crime seemed to sanction an aggressive style of policing that casts all poor people as delinquents who must be contained. Hasan's description of himself as a public character seemed an appealing alternative, and Duneier set out to learn more about him and his fellow vendors. Armed with a tape recorder, he recorded hundreds of exchanges between the vendors and their customers. For several months, he worked as a vendor himself. He went out with the magazine vendors to see how they scavenged their merchandise from the trash. He interviewed panhandlers and the men stationed at the doors of ATM machines. He persuaded twenty vendors to tell him their life stories. In all, Duneier spent five years hanging out on Sixth Avenue, and *Sidewalk* is the result.

Initially, Duneier observes, he regarded the vendors with suspicion. Most, he found, had been addicted to drugs at some point in their lives. Many had been jailed for crimes linked to their drug use. And many were homeless. Laying out their wares on the sidewalk, accosting people as they passed by, sleeping on the ground on pieces of corrugated cardboard, the men seemed a blight on the neighborhood.

The more Duneier got to know the vendors, however, the more impressed he was. Far from creating disorder, the men seemed to adhere to a set of informal social norms that had an inhibiting effect on their behavior. Some of the older vendors, for instance, acted as mentors to their less socialized colleagues, teaching them the ropes of vending and encouraging them to get their lives together. "One of the most surprising things I learned in hearing the life histories from Sixth Avenue," Duneier writes, "was how many of these men had actually taught one another how to hunt for magazines, how to set up their tables, and how to make 'an honest living.'"

ON A GOOD DAY, DUNeier found, a vendor could earn a hundred dollars or more, saving him from having to steal. A vendor named Mudrick, for instance, had once robbed deliverymen and sold drugs to get money, but now he relies on selling magazines. As a society, Duneier writes, "we will improve our well-being by making provision for more persons, not fewer, to engage in informal entrepreneurial activity."

Eventually, Duneier comes to accept Hasan's characterization of his role. "After spending five years on the blocks," he writes, "I would propose that the role of the public character need not be filled by conventionally respectable people. Not only do the vendors and scavengers, often unhoused, abide by codes and norms; but mostly their presence on the street enhances the social order. They keep their eyes upon the street, and the structure of sidewalk life encourages them to support one another. Moreover, many citizens enjoy the presence of the vendors on the sidewalk."

All in all, it's a beguiling vision that Duneier puts forth. But is it realistic? For any city dweller who regularly encounters clusters of homeless, drug-addled men such as the vendors on Sixth Avenue, the notion that they are enhancing the social order seems a bit farfetched. And, in fact, Duneier unwittingly provides much evidence that contradicts his thesis. While sometimes good-hearted and well intentioned, the vendors seem routinely to engage in obnoxious behavior. Ron, for instance, is a chronic crack and alcohol user who, whenever he has enough money, runs off to get high. "He can be charming," Duneier observes, "but he has gone through periods in the past when he was feared by both local residents and other people working the streets, especially when drunk."

Mudrick, who is known for getting tourists to pay him for directions (through intimidation, perhaps?), drinks St. Ides Malt Liquor for breakfast. And Leo, who is paid by vendors to hold spots of the sidewalk for them, establishes his ownership rights by instilling fear in others. "My psychiatrist told me that when I feel stressed out to scream and holler," he tells Duneier. "Just let it out. So I will run up and down Sixth Avenue screaming and hollering at anybody because I am so angry with myself." Not exactly public-character material.

When they need to relieve themselves, the vendors usually go in the immediate vicinity. A popular location is the Washington Court Condominium, the walls of which have crevices that make for convenient urinals. One vendor shows Duneier how he is able to pee into a paper cup while pretending he is hailing a cab. Another man shows how he unlocks a Dumpster and defecates in it (giving new meaning to that trade name). Duneier finds nothing unusual here. While "indecent" from the standpoint of "mainstream society," he writes, such behavior "can, of course, be compared with the behavior of wealthier, white men." Duneier writes that he has heard from "a friend who plays golf at the Hillcrest Country Club in Beverly Hills that it is not uncommon to see men urinate on the golf course, despite the restrooms scattered throughout the tract." Duneier adds: "In all socioeconomic classes, the male act of urinating in public seems to be common, though those who work the streets seem to have fewer

DVIE CARTER/FSG

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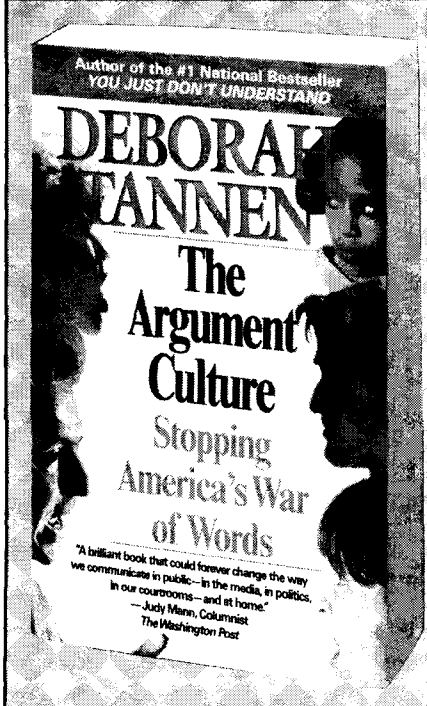
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options as to where to go." Restrooms in New York City are notoriously scarce, but, to anyone who has had the experience of returning to his or her apartment building to find a homeless person urinating on it, Duneier's effort to explain away the vendors' behavior will seem small comfort.

In another section, Duneier describes the vendors' habit of verbally accosting women—especially well-off white women—as they walk by. "Hi, pretty," says one in a typical comment recorded by Duneier. "You look so nice. I don't see no ring on your finger. When you want to get married?" When the woman doesn't respond, the man becomes more insistent. Devoting a full chapter to these encounters, Duneier dissects them according to an abstruse academic discipline called conversation analysis, which attempts to find hidden cues in the lulls and inflections of everyday conversation. In the end, Duneier writes, the men's behavior is unsettling not because "any real threat is present" but "because practical conversational ethics are being betrayed in a search for power and dignity." Perhaps so, but the women feel hassled nonetheless.

To Duneier, the state of being homeless is itself nothing out of the ordinary. Many of the vendors, he insists, are homeless by choice. "For some of these men," he writes, "sleeping in a bed no longer feels natural. Although most Americans take sleeping in a bed as basic to decency, the conventional bed is not a physical necessity but a cultural artifact; many people of the world regard a bed as less healthy for sleeping than a hard surface." Duneier is so eager to normalize the behavior of his subjects that he refuses to apply the word

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"homeless" to them, preferring the term "unhoused."

In *Sidewalk,* Duneier provides a running commentary on his research techniques. In a twenty-nine-page appendix on his methodology, he writes, "I regard myself as an urban sociologist working in the traditions of the Chicago School of Urban Sociology of the 1920s." Citing as his "intellectual forebears" people like W.E.B. Du Bois, Robert E. Park, Elliot Liebow, and Herbert Gans, Duneier writes that "my primary goal as a scholar is to carry on some of their traditions in order to illuminate issues of race and/or poverty as found in American cities in the current era."

Unlike most of those forebears, however, Duneier makes no attempt to fade into the background of his research. He is forever referring to himself, his thoughts, his tape recorder. In one three-sentence paragraph, the pronoun I appears four times. When the police one day attempt to shut down the vendors' operations, Duneier, incensed, gets into a confrontation with them. And when the vendors are denied access to the bathroom in a fast-food restaurant, he asks for the key in an effort to prove discrimination.

As such actions suggest, Duneier strongly identifies with his subjects. While this helps him appreciate the injustices they must frequently endure, it blinds him to the sentiments of those who must share the sidewalk with them. Duneier says that he interviewed fifty "apartment dwellers," but their views rarely creep into his text. One customer he does visit in her apartment tells him, "My husband is a First Amendment lawyer and Marvin [a vendor] is doing First Amendment work. And I think it's *great* that he is out there." The woman, who has a photograph of Fidel Castro on her wall, happens to be the publisher of *Covert Action Quarterly,* a radical journal dedicated to exposing the activities of the Central Intelligence Agency. Even by Village standards, she does not seem representative.

Occasionally, other, more negative views do leak through Duneier's sieve. The manager of a convenience store near Sixth Avenue says of the panhandlers and scavengers that "aside from the nuisance they create, they sometimes don't look presentable. They sometimes smell bad. They sometimes smoke drugs or urinate. Right in front! Without any regards for law or anything!" In the book's most dramatic scene, the owner of a local bookstore angrily accuses Hasan of selling copies of a novel *(Push)* stolen from her store. When Hasan objects, the owner shows him the signature of the author (Sapphire) inside—put there, she says, in her store. The encounter leads Duneier to investigate whether the books sold on the sidewalk have been stolen. He concludes that up to 40 percent of Hakim's books have been, not by him but by his sources, who include individual scavengers, professional fences who specialize in best-sellers, and employees at the publishing houses themselves. After a long and convoluted discussion, however, Duneier characteristically excuses these facts by claiming that legitimate bookstores sell stolen books as well.

In his conclusion, Duneier urges the adoption of a "new social-control strategy" for dealing with the vendors on the sidewalk:

> At its core can be unrelenting demands for responsible behavior, but there could also be new kinds of enlightened understanding from the citizenry, leading to greater tolerance and respect for people working the sidewalk.

OVIE CARTER/FSG

To Duneier, being homeless is itself nothing out of the ordinary. "Many people," he writes, "regard a bed as less healthy for sleeping than a hard surface."

More bluntly, Duneier cites Mudrick's remark about the unsettling comments he makes to women on the street: "They gotta deal with it." Like the vendors or not, Duneier believes, we had better get used to having them around.

But New Yorkers are not willing to get used to having them around. That's why Giuliani was elected, and reelected. And it's why mayors across the country are emulating aspects of his quality-of-life campaign. American city dwellers want to be able to use their sidewalks without being hassled, without having to dodge pools of urine, without seeing glassy-eyed men yelling wildly in the street.

At the same time, many New Yorkers are beginning to rebel against the "broken windows" strategy and the excesses it has engendered. The herding of homeless people off the street, the mass roundups of drug addicts, the constant hounding of minority youths, the brazen aggressiveness of the police—all have fed a growing backlash against the Giuliani approach. Thus we have the central challenge of urban politics today: how to make our streets safe for law-abiding citizens while treating everyone with fairness and justice. By seeing the sidewalk only through the eyes of the vendors, Duneier is oblivious to this tension. We still await our modern-day Jane Jacobs.

Michael Massing is an adjunct professor at the Columbia School of Journalism and the author of *The Fix: A Study of the Nation's Drug Problem Since the 1960s* (Simon & Schuster, 1998).

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A Star Is Born

BY RICHARD PANEK

The Star of Bethlehem: An Astronomer's View
by Mark Kidger
Princeton University Press
320 pp. • $22.95 • November

The Star of Bethlehem: The Legacy of the Magi
by Michael R. Molnar
Rutgers University Press
187 pp. • $25.00 • September

THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI BY GIOTTO DI BONDONE

ALINARI/ART RESOURCE

SLIGHTLY MORE THAN two millennia ago, in the night sky over a small hill town south of Jerusalem, something happened, or didn't, and whatever it was, or wasn't, was an honest-to-God miracle, or a naturally occurring astronomical phenomenon, or neither, or both.

Discuss.

Such is the state of star of Bethlehem scholarship. We cannot know for sure what the light in the east was that directed the wise men to Bethlehem to greet the newborn Jesus, and any attempt at a natural explanation of what the star might have been must take the supernatural into account. Otherwise, why bother?

This unholy mix of religion and science is what compels the enduring fascination with what would otherwise seem a narrow, peculiar, and quite possibly purposeless arena of scholarship. Michael R. Molnar, a former Rutgers astronomer and a leading authority on the star, writes on the first page of his book's preface that every Christmas his phone rings with "calls from people around the world who want to learn what happened in the sky two millennia ago." Meanwhile, according to Mark Kidger of the Instituto de Astrofisica de Canarias in Tenerife, Spain, star of Bethlehem Web sites "have become a minor industry." Certainly it's not just scientific curiosity that's driving this popular demand for star of Bethlehem scholarship. But what's driving the supply? No matter what a star scholar might conjecture or reveal, chances are it won't completely satisfy either

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the religious or scientific faithful. It's like putting a Communion wafer under a microscope: Depending on what you believe, empiricism is either inadequate or irrelevant to the task. Why bother, indeed?

But bother these scholars do. In *The Star of Bethlehem: An Astronomer's View,* Kidger recapitulates their efforts—and then capitulates: "Probably we will never know, and *can* never know, for certain what the Star of Bethlehem really was." The account of the star appears only in the Gospel of Matthew, which was probably written a hundred years after the fact (or fiction); it presents a "selected, edited and abridged" version of a story that had been passed on orally for about sixty years after Jesus' death. Moreover, the Gospel doesn't survive in original form. As Kidger notes, "even the very oldest Gospel texts we have are probably copies of copies."

As uncertain as the origins of the story are, there is a further, even fatal, complication: Was the star merely a mythological element that storytellers introduced in order to illustrate the royal and divine lineage of the future King of the Jews? If it was mythological, then the astronomer's job is over. But assuming that the star corresponded to a genuine celestial event—and the fact that Matthew refers to it twice suggests that it did—the scholar hoping to discern what it was must first figure out *when* it was.

Which leads to only greater uncertainty. Kidger dates Jesus' birth to March of 5 B.C.; other scholars, including Molnar, to 6 B.C. The difference of a year in trying to pinpoint heavenly events is astronomically significant. And then there's the whole business of, as Matthew says, the "wise men from the East," a.k.a. the three kings. It turns out, however, that Matthew is maddeningly vague not only about their country of origin but—carols, crèches, and other modern Christmas traditions notwithstanding—about who they were (not kings, certainly) or even how many they were (more than one, anyway).

Which brings us to the event itself: the star, or whatever it was. Kidger rounds up the usual suspects: Halley's comet, another (possibly still unidentified) comet, a conjunction of two or more planets, or—twentieth-century astronomy's contribution to the speculation—a supernova. Burdening any such analysis before it can even begin, however, is Matthew's indication that the star moved from the east to the south. Kidger convincingly explains that this seeming anomaly could reflect the regular movement of the heavens over the course of several months. But then there is the question of how King Herod failed to see the star when it stopped over Bethlehem. If whatever it was burned bright enough in the night sky to lure whomever the Magi were on a long, difficult, dangerous journey, wouldn't the psychotically paranoid Herod have noticed it from a distance of only a few miles?

Not, Kidger suggests, if it wasn't a bright object at all. Instead of an astronomically noteworthy event, what if the star were an astrologically significant sign, or a series of such signs, that the Magi interpreted as denoting the birth of a future king? With this thought in mind, Kidger pores over the astronomical record and posits his own *Murder on the Orient Express*–style solution: They all did it. The conspirators? A planetary conjunction in 7 B.C., a massing of planets in 6 B.C., two pairings (moon with Jupiter, Mars with Saturn) in 5 B.C., and, finally, a nova, also in 5 B.C.

This is no more a solution, however, than the star it conceives is really a star. It's speculation, as Kidger admits. Through his extensive research, Kidger has earned the right to speculate, but what he offers is an argument that we can't evaluate without a proper historical context. What might astrology in general, and these portents in particular, have meant to the Magi? His failure to consider his possible solution from the point of view of a first-century-B.C. holy man could easily lead us to assume that adequate historical records simply don't exist.

In fact, they do. Molnar, in

Molnar's coin suggested a link between Judea and the sign of Aries.

The Star of Bethlehem: The Legacy of the Magi, unearths and examines exactly the historical context previous star scholars have so often missed. In setting the stage, Molnar highlights three crucial factors: advances in astronomy in the first-century-B.C.; the use of astrology to make sense of the fresh data emanating from those astronomical advances; and the ongoing clash between Romans and Jews that caused Romans to fear the messianic prophecy and Jews to anticipate its fulfillment. As a result, Molnar writes, underscoring a point that Kidger also makes (though far less centrally or persuasively), "people were indeed watching the skies for the advent of the Messiah."

But what were they looking for? In 1991, Molnar was studying Roman coins from the first century A.D. when he realized that they might provide a clue about ancient astrology—specifically, the coins suggested an association between the kingdom of Herod and the sign of Aries. "With this important clue," he writes, "I set out to find what a stargazer of Roman times would have recognized as the star of the new Judean king." While Jews themselves didn't practice astrology—and therefore might well have missed the signs that sent the Magi on their journey—"news of a celestial portent pointing to a new king would nevertheless have attracted much attention among people hoping for the coming of the Messiah."

Molnar dispenses with the familiar hypotheses in one brisk chapter. He argues that phenomena such as a comet or a supernova might have been "visually spectacular" but were nonetheless astrologically meaningless. He also notes that unwitting scholars have accepted as historical fact numerous inaccuracies that have crept into the record over the millennia. In this regard, Molnar indirectly delivers a devastating blow to much of Kidger's multisuspect solution. Kidger, like many star scholars, repeatedly searches the first-century-B.C. skies for potential portents in Pisces, "the constellation of the Jews." Molnar, however, calls this a zodiacal misidentification.

According to Molnar, modern scholars borrow the asso-

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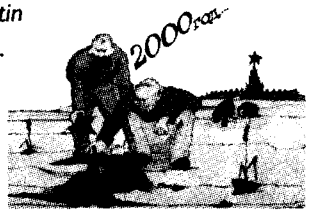

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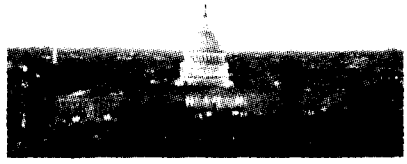

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ciation of Pisces with Judea from the astronomer Johannes Kepler. But Kepler had blindly accepted the word of Rabbi Isaac Abarbanel, a Sephardic Jew and fugitive from the Spanish Inquisition who "drew his conclusions from his personal beliefs, not from primary astrological sources of Roman times." To Renaissance scholars, the rabbi's identification of Pisces with Judea fit neatly with their own Christian fish symbolism. When Molnar checks the ancient astrological sources themselves, however, he finds that "none equated Pisces to Judea," and he concludes that any "theories that rely on Pisces as a sign of the Jews" therefore don't "reflect the practices and beliefs at the time of the Magi."

Instead, taking his cue from the Roman coin, Molnar locates three ancient sources that identify Herod's Judean kingdom with Aries. He then revisits the language in Matthew's account of the Nativity and offers interpretations of the Gospel's crucial and confusing claims that a star "went before" the Magi and "stood over" Bethlehem: He notes that the planet Jupiter, in Aries, first "went retrograde" (appeared to reverse direction) and then "became stationary" (appeared to stop before reversing direction again).

Most convincingly, Molnar locates in ancient sources the signs that astrologers of the day would have interpreted as pointing to the kind of birth that would send wise men on a pilgrimage. He then searches astronomical data for a date that would have agreed with a "hypothetical best case" of astrological conditions, and he finds it: April 17 in 6 B.C. "Indeed," Molnar concludes, "there is nothing ambiguous about the implications for Judea; the astrological conditions in Aries blatantly point to...the birth of a divine, immortal, and omnipotent person."

> Is Molnar's case airtight? No. Is it convincing? Yes.

To be sure, everyone born on that date would have the same horoscope. But the wise men—"astrologers of antiquity" who "were the scientists of their time"—would have known that the Messiah was to be a descendant of David, whose house was in Bethlehem. Presumably, only one child had been born in that small town on that date.

Is Molnar's case airtight? No. Is it convincing? Yes. Does it matter if he's right or wrong? Absolutely not.

And that's what distinguishes his scholarship. By elaborately reconstructing astrological beliefs at the time of the event, Molnar illuminates the culture of the time. Unlike mystery-solving scholarship that consigns the reader to the role of spectator, his methodology involves us as participants in his sleuthing. In so doing, it subverts any scientific or religious biases we might bring to the subject of the star of Bethlehem and suggests a whole other kind of answer to the question "Why bother?" It's a response that couldn't be more intellectually engaging: Why, it's no bother at all.

Richard Panek is an astronomy columnist for *Natural History* and the author of *Seeing and Believing: How the Telescope Opened Our Eyes and Minds to the Heavens* (Penguin, 1999).

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Sweet Home Arizona

BY JoANN WYPIJEWSKI

The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction
By Linda Gordon
Harvard University Press
416 pp. • $29.95 • November

IT SEEMED AN ORDINARY enough journey given its extraordinary purpose. It began September 25, 1904, with a train gleaming as it left Grand Central Station, becoming progressively sooty as it crossed farms and plains onward to the bleached Southwestern desert, carrying through that curious, harsh territory three Sisters of Charity from the New York Foundling Hospital, four nurses, one male agent/protector, and fifty-seven orphans destined for Arizona and the foster families awaiting them.

The orphans were mostly the sons and daughters of Irish immigrants, the majority of whom weren't dead at all, only too poor or too young—often both—to care for their children. The foundling hospital was a last-chance depository, where women left their babies, sometimes wordlessly, sometimes with a note pinned to a smock: "This is little Augusta, born January 30, 1870. O Crule Poverty."

That particular message preceded by a generation the birth of these Arizona-bound children, but the sentiment, and the conditions of life, had not much changed. The Irish were the biggest immigrant group in New York City, among the most powerful but also the poorest. They dominated the Democratic Party and the Roman Catholic Church; also the servant class, right down to street level, where Irish women constituted the largest group of prostitutes. Among the city's elite, the Irish were caricatured as drunken and loose, and even among the Irish themselves, striving for recognition and status, the foundlings were an embarrassment, symbols of an improvident "race." The train crossing was therefore a dramatic pivot, a passage that, writes Linda Gordon in *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*, not only "transported [the children] from orphanhood to son- and daughterhood" but also "transformed them from Irish to white." You see, the women preparing to embrace the children in the twin copper-mining towns of Clifton and Morenci were Mexican, and they never could be "white."

Writing contemporaneously with the events at the heart of Gordon's fascinating, almost cinematic book, John R. Commons in his *Races and Immigrants in America* observed, "The children of all the races of the temperate zones are eligible to the highest American civilization, and it only needs that they be 'caught' young enough." By "caught," Commons, in 1907 a professor at the University of Wisconsin (Gordon's academic home), meant enmeshed in "American" institutions and acclimated, if possible, by "American" families, all toward the advancement of "American" democracy. It's doubtful that this republican-minded, if liberally bigoted, intellectual would have counseled the Anglos of Clifton-Morenci to go so far in the civilizing mission as to form vigilante squads, kidnap the children from their new Mexican families, threaten the Sisters, their agent, and the local priest with tar, feathers and lead; but it amounted to the same.

With women taking the initiative, the Anglos of the towns did all of those things, submerging their class and social differences to thwart this family "race mixing," which they regarded as child abuse. Women who worked in their husbands' saloons took orphans for themselves and denounced the Mexicans as drunkards and libertines. Mine supervisors who had opposed Mexican workers' demands for raises and showers now ridiculed the same workers as poor and dirty. The Sisters themselves conceded that there had been a mistake: The local priest, a Frenchman who'd chosen the Mexican families for their piety (few Anglos were Catholic, and fewer attended church), wasn't sufficiently sensitive to notice that the prospective mothers weren't "fair" enough for the children.

ARIZONA WOMAN WITH TWO ADOPTED GIRLS, 1906

COURTESY GREENLEE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Back in New York, the foundling hospital ultimately didn't challenge the kidnap-

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ping or the race hate or even the presumption of Protestants to claim Catholic children but sued only for the return of its infant property. And all the way up to the Supreme Court, the guardians of the nation's written and unwritten race laws validated Arizona's ruling that "the child in question is a white, Caucasian child" and the Mexican is, "by reason of his race, mode of living, habits and education, unfit to have the custody, care and education of the child." In Com-

HISPANIC LODGE

The Anglos formed vigilante squads, kidnapped the orphans from their new Mexican families, and threatened the nuns and the local priest.

mons's terms, being "caught" by a Mexican would consign the formerly Irish street urchin forever to a state of beastliness.

GORDON TELLS THIS STORY in nine narrative chapters that suspensefully reconstruct a few days in 1904 and 1905. Spliced between those chapters are explorations of copper mining and company towns, borderlands and the construction of apartheid in the Southwest, miraculous faith and religious structure, migration and its shaping of womanhood, "orphan trains," family dynamics, vigilantism and labor militancy as expressed in the great strike of 1903. Now, almost a hundred years after the "orphan abduction," its principals are dead and the memory of it distorted. A Federal Writers' Project oral history recounted the Anglos' tale of child abuse; Mexican accounts were not preserved. So Gordon has brilliantly retrieved history, in the process providing a vivid, complex addition to the growing scholarship on "whiteness."

Her purpose is at least twofold, though: to illustrate how the toxic "race contract" of Americanism trumped all; and to trace the ways women used their passionate attachment to maternity to express defiance and expand their social authority. She succeeds better in the first of those aims—perhaps because the historical record that exists about the women is limited to their public actions, leaving private motives to conjecture, perhaps because the orphan taking was not fundamentally about children or motherhood at all.

To say that impels one to want to take it back almost immediately. As Gordon's work shows so well, history is like a fine, tangled chain. Pull on a single strand and you get nowhere. Work away at the mass of strands, following the trail of their entanglement, and you recover the whole. Certainly, the frenzy over the children in Clifton-Morenci was not just about color or national chauvinism. It was also about class status—an opportunity for common Anglo laborers to act as one with merchants and mine supervisors (here Gordon's chapter on vigilantism, Anglo and Mexican, is wonderful) and another means of solidifying the two-tier pay scale in the mines. The Mexican wage, it was argued, disqualified Mexicans from orphan adoption but was deemed adequate to support Mexican children; that disqualification, along with social proscriptions against intermarriage, hindered Mexican families in their own quest for higher status via fairer skin.

Because women took in the children, and women instigated the kidnapping, the orphan incident also involved sex-role expectations. In Anglo society, the women's claim to superior knowledge of child welfare gave them standing to set the orphan "rescue" in motion (it's doubtful that without their insistence the Anglo men would have taken much interest), just as it credentialed them to advocate for education, sanitation, and charitable works. Their claim to virtue gave them standing to judge Mexican morality. And it was only through such womanly concerns that they had power to shape civic life. But it's a leap from there to assert, as Gordon does, that "one component of the Anglo women's sense of racial superiority was their desire to advance women." Or that "their own restiveness against male dominance led Anglo women to even greater disregard for another group of women." Or that the "women's clash could be called a tragic encounter because both groups were motivated in large part by the truly charitable impulse to mother an orphan, an impulse defiled by racism but visible nevertheless."

All of this may be true, but there's little evidence for it. The Anglo women vilified Mexican men as violent and domineering—could not the same be said of their husbands?—but they did not act

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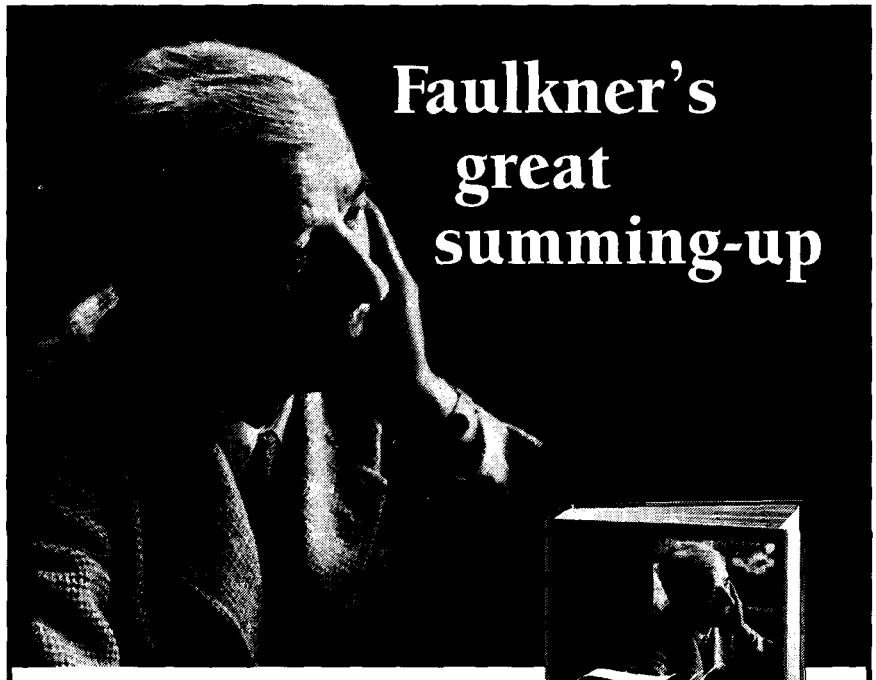
to relieve pressure on Mexican families, did not approve of Mexican women who chose Anglo men, and could not conceive that education for Mexican girls might extend beyond training to be servants. Their improving mission certainly gave Anglo women a slim escape from the home, but who's to say that its vehemence in this case had to do with defiance rather than with that sense of racial superiority? And except for a few oohs and ahs over the children on first sight at the train station, it's not at all clear that these women were driven by maternal passions. They sanctioned the kidnapping, after all—at gunpoint, in the night, in the rain. (One child later died, perhaps as a result of this exposure.) They sanctioned the terrorizing of the nuns and of the children whom the vigilantes had not succeeded in wresting away. And once they had a collection of orphans under their control, they picked over them as if over merchandise, selecting for characteristics they judged most desirable.

It's hard to imagine that the Anglo women so warmed by the children's appearance would have developed fevered desires for them if the women waiting to claim the tots in the church had been white. They may have sincerely feared child abuse, but there seems no reason to believe that at the core of that fear were maternal feelings, just as ninety years later the panic over "ritual abuse" in day-care centers had almost nothing to do with child welfare and everything to do with fears about family fragility, fears about sex, feelings of powerlessness—and plain old crowd pathology (as Gordon masterfully dissected in a 1989 article for *Against the Current*).

GORDON'S DISCUSSION of the women's realities is never facile, but it seems that only a wishful faith in sisterhood under the skin could have prompted her to lament its absence here, to speak of the orphan story as "a tragedy generated from silence, created because two groups of women could not speak to each other." The assumption here of women's natural unity parallels another argument, made by the venerable professor Commons and by prominent academics today (though not by Gordon): that class fellowship should supersede racial conflict once workers find common cause in unions, that the tragedy of working-class racism lies in workers' inability to see how divisions are manipulated from capitalist high command.

Certainly, they are manipulated, but organized labor's continued confrontation with racism indicates there's more to the story. Similarly, Gordon compellingly shows how the poisonously creative, ever-shifting boundaries of race made any expectations of sorority impossible. Not proximity or class interest or even a shared status of exclusion had a prayer of matching



In his last years, knowing that time was running out, William Faulkner committed himself to completing his epic chronicle of the fictional Yoknapatawpha County. This volume, the fourth in The Library of America's new, authoritative edition of his complete works, offers his last three novels—*The Town*, telling of the rise of the rapacious Snopes family, *The Mansion*, recounting its fall, and *The Reivers*, Faulkner's elegiac tribute to an earlier, more innocent time.

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"race" power. Where Gordon is so interesting, and where the book haunts the reader afterward, is in the way her narrative tracks the subtle, persistent, untidy presence of that poisonous creativity.

So, as she relays, American soldiers (white and black) considered the Apaches savages and killed them. Mexicans called the Apaches *indios bárbaros,* considering them brave but wild, and killed them, too. Mexicans called themselves *gente de razón,* people of reason, and were themselves called wild, backward, and stupid by the Anglos, who also spoke of "the wild Irish." With live Indians annihilated, the white men of the town mimed their traditions and invoked "the true American spirit" in establishing the whites-only Improved Order of Red Men. In listing his parishioners, the priest who had assigned the orphans followed U.S. Census categories. Among "family heads (white)," he counted 7 Americans, 4 Italians, 12 Spaniards, 156 Mexicans. Among "family heads (nonwhite)," he counted no one. The majority of Anglos slotted Italians and Spaniards into a racial netherworld, but then rallied to the cries of one Louisa Gotti, who demanded Whites for the Whites in the orphan matter.

And that's not the half of it. A generation earlier, Mexicans had joined Anglos in expelling Chinese from the mines. Meanwhile, "white man's camps" barred Chinese, Mexicans, southern and eastern Europeans but not blacks: As Gordon recounts, "James Young, a black man at the Contention mine in nearby Tombstone, remarked 'Si White and I were the first white men in Tombstone after Gird and Schieffelin.'" Both Anglos and Mexicans reveled in minstrel shows, whether in segregated or integrated theaters. The socialist Western Federation of Miners excluded Mexicans, fanned anti-Mexican bigotry, and, even while supporting a "Mexican strike" in Clifton-Morenci in 1915–1916, lobbied for laws to deprive Mexicans of jobs and the vote.

Toward the end of her book, Gordon writes, "Part of the tenaciousness and adaptability of the idea of race is that it harmonizes so well with the emotional secret gardens we construct around family relations." She is explaining why children particularly should have evoked such extreme reactions as occurred in Arizona in 1904. She could equally well be talking about the way racism is reproduced in the emotional secret gardens every person holds within, the existential hideouts that must be visited and revisited, until all that's sown by poison is named and uprooted.

JoAnn Wypijewski is a senior editor of *The Nation*. Her book, *Painting by Numbers: Komar and Melamid's Scientific Guide to Art,* was recently published in paperback by the University of California Press.

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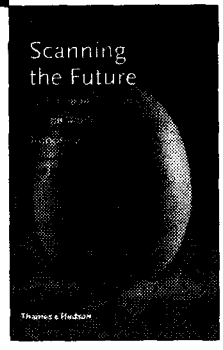

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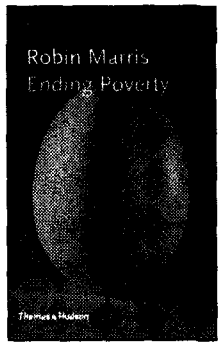

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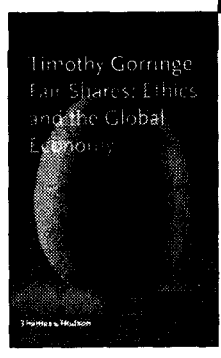

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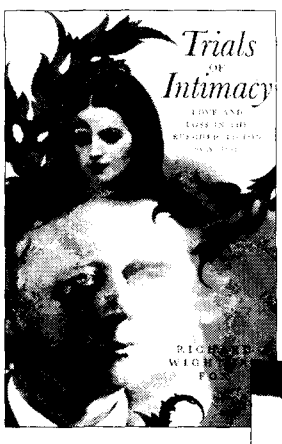

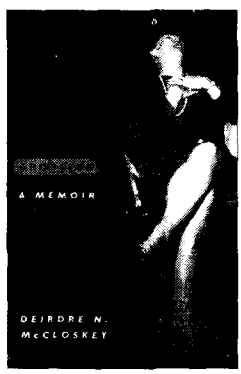

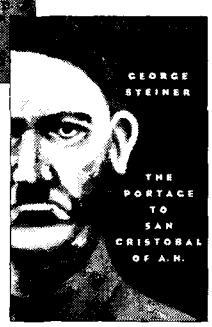

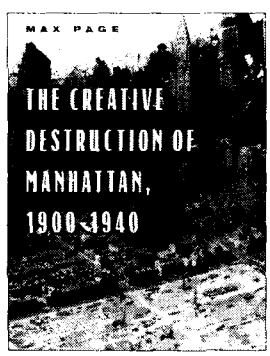

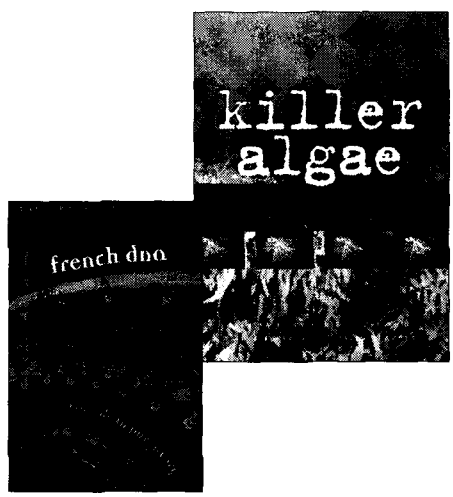

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The Guilty Party

BY ADAM SHATZ

IN 1946, THE RUSSIAN journalist Ilya Ehrenburg and the novelist Vassily Grossman published *The Black Book,* an explosive report on the German Einsatzgruppen's campaign of terror against Soviet Jews. The book did not sit well with Stalin, who thought it placed too much emphasis on the identity of Hitler's victims. After all, mused the Soviet dictator, the Red Army did not fight fascism merely to save the Jews. As was his custom in such cases, he suppressed the book, which ultimately entered the subterranean culture known as samizdat.

A half century later, there is a new *Black Book,* only this time it is not about the Nazis but about regimes like the one that banned Ehrenburg and Grossman's study. *The Black Book of Communism* is a collection of essays by French historians on the "crimes, terrors, and repression" committed by the socialist governments that once flew the red flag over one third of humanity.

When the book was published in France two years ago, during the eightieth anniversary of the October Revolution, its introduction set off an incendiary debate by suggesting that communism was more murderous than Nazism—so incendiary, in fact, that the disillusioned ex-communists who assembled the 858-page book had a bitter falling-out. The cover of the Harvard edition

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MAO TSE-TUNG, 1959

The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression
Edited by Stéphane Courtois, Nicolas Werth, Jean-Louis Panné, Andrzej Paczkowski, Karel Bartošek, and Jean-Louis Margolin
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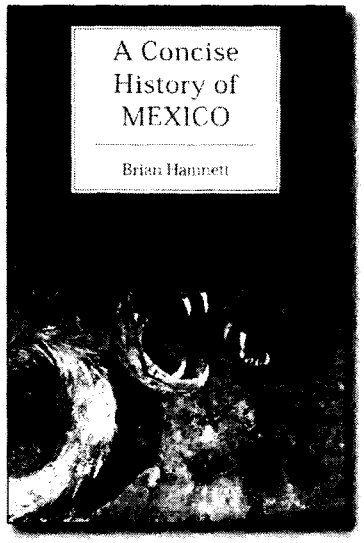

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Brian R. Hamnett

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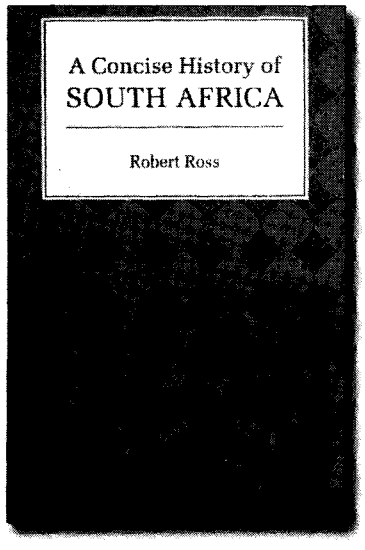

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lists six editors below the title, giving them the appearance of an anticommunist united front. But, as the secret history of our century ought to have taught us, such appearances are often deceptive.

Just weeks after *The Black Book of Communism* was published, in late October 1997, the volume's two most distinguished contributors—Nicolas Werth, a historian of the Soviet Union, and Jean-Louis Margolin, a China expert—angrily repudiated the editor Stéphane Courtois in a series of interviews and articles published in *Le Monde*. The scholars were infuriated by Courtois's introductory screed indicting international communism for "crimes against peace, war crimes, and crimes against humanity" and characterizing fellow travelers as "common prostitutes." Worst of all, they complained, Courtois had not permitted them to see the introduction prior to publication. On October 31, Werth and Margolin were quoted in *Le Monde* excoriating Courtois for effacing "the historical character" of communism and for vastly inflating the number of deaths that occurred under it.

The introduction had originally been assigned to François Furet, the dean of French Revolution historians and one of France's most prominent ex-communists. But when Furet died—shortly after publishing a passionate inventory of communist crimes and his own intellectual complicity in them, *The Passing of an Illusion*—responsibility for the introduction fell to Courtois. In venom, if not in vim, he outdid the great scholar, blasting Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Castro, and dozens of others for turning "mass crime into a full-blown system of government." Moreover, he claimed that communism had caused four times as many deaths as Nazism: 100 million as compared with Nazism's 25 million. On the scale of what Hannah Arendt called "radical evil," Courtois implied that communism deserved a ranking as high as, if not higher than, Nazism.

Courtois was careful to distinguish his approach from the exculpatory arguments of German revisionist historians like Ernst Nolte, who have let Hitler off the hook by asserting that Stalin's campaign against Ukraine's kulaks was the original genocide. He was less careful in charging that "a single-minded focus on the Jewish genocide," cynically encouraged by communists after the war, "also prevented an assessment of" communist crimes. In fact, the Jewish genocide barely registered among French intellectuals until the late 1980s, when Raul Hilberg's seminal study, *The Destruction of the European Jews,* finally appeared in translation. The Russian gulag, as exposed by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, had received far more attention thanks to the new philosophers of the 1970s.

TO SOME FRENCH READERS, Courtois's recitation of communist crimes against humanity smacked of fascist apologia. After all, this was a country where, as the Princeton historian Anson Rabinbach observed in *Dissent* last year, "the demand for a 'Nuremberg trial of communism' has a particular connotation, frequently reiterated by Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the National Front, to justify not prosecuting French crimes of the Vichy era." Since the book's publication coincided with Maurice Papon's trial on charges of Nazi collaboration during the Vichy years, French readers were invited to contemplate the notion that partisan resistance fighters, many of them communists and all of them in alliance with Soviet Russia, were

JOSEPH STALIN

Were French resistance fighters on no firmer moral ground than a pro-fascist bureaucrat who sent Jewish women and children to the ovens?

on no firmer moral ground than a pro-fascist bureaucrat who sent Jewish women and children to the ovens.

Whether or not this was Courtois's intention, and it probably wasn't—Courtois considers himself an anticommunist social democrat—*The Black Book of Communism* aroused tremendous ire on the French left. Indeed, Courtois's hyperbole provided some leftists with the perfect excuse for a display of antifascist indignation, one that conveniently swept under the rug their own compromised history of pro-Sovietism. On November 7, 1997, Claude Cabane, the editor of the communist daily *L'Humanité,* assailed the book as an exercise in rightist propaganda, quoting Primo Levi's remark that "one cannot imagine a Nazism without the gas chambers, but one can imagine a Communism without the camps." The historian Annette Wieviorka chimed in with a denunciation in *Le Monde:* "Stéphane Courtois proposes simply and purely to substitute in popular memory communist criminality for Nazi criminality." Is it any wonder, she asked, that the book has been greeted with "jubilation" by Le Pen supporters? *The Black Book of Communism,* in her view, amounted to little more than "agitprop scholarship." "One could just as easily write a *Black Book* of capitalist crimes," she quipped.

On November 12, the debate reached the chambers of parliament. Armed with grisly figures from *The Black Book of Communism,* Michel Voisin, a deputy from the center-right UDF coalition, interrogated the Socialist prime minister Lionel Jospin about his party's governing coalition with the French communists. While acknowledging the brutalities inflicted by Stalin, Jospin petulantly instructed his listeners in the history of World War II and vigorously defended his communist allies as patriotic heirs to the resistance whom he was "proud" to have in his government.

By now it was Courtois's turn to reply to his critics. He did, in a pungent rejoinder of nearly three thousand words in *Le Monde*. Considering that

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communism so often betrayed its commitment to "an ideal of generosity, fraternity and equality," he asserted, "one is entitled to ask whether [killing in the name of such an ideal] is more excusable than murder linked to a racist doctrine. To what extent do illusion or hypocrisy constitute extenuating circumstances in mass crimes?" Finally, he scoffed at the charge that he was offering comfort to the extreme right by calling attention to communist crimes, declaring, "The victims of communism do not erase the victims of Nazism."

At this point, *The Black Book of Communism* was so enveloped in charges and countercharges that its contents risked becoming a casualty of all the publicity. Last January, Nicolas Weill, a journalist with *Le Monde,* worried that "the transformation of this book into a pamphlet still prevents it from being taken for what it is: an excellent book of history."

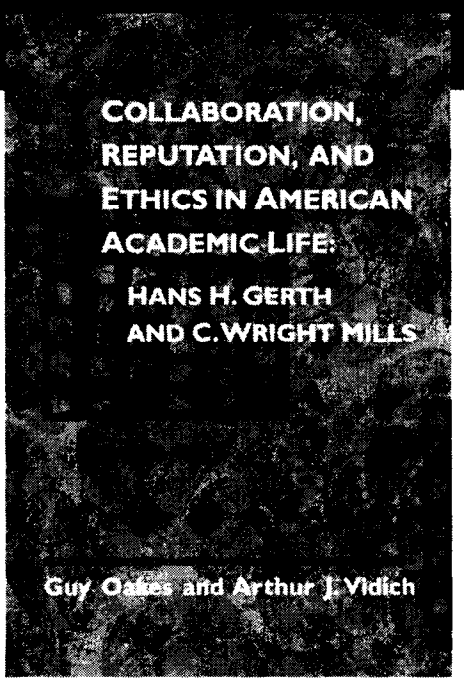
THIS IS ONLY PARTLY true. Of the fourteen essays in *The Black Book of Communism,* only two stand out as impressively researched contributions to scholarship: Werth's study of Russia, which is the length of a short book, and Margolin's survey of Mao's bloody carnival of ideological correctness in China.

Werth's monograph, "A State Against Its People," is the first and most rewarding section of *The Black Book of Communism*. Drawing on recently unsealed archival material, he shows how, in the early years of the civil war, state terror became a "means of government" for Lenin and the Bolsheviks, laying the foundations for Stalinism. Determined to requisition grain from rebellious peasants, Lenin encouraged soldiers—as he wrote to his comrade Zinoviev—to "make use of the energy of mass terror." Although the Bolsheviks faced a brutal adversary in the anti-Semitic White Russian armies that carried out murderous pogroms in the Ukraine, Werth argues that the Bolsheviks planned their killings more systematically and on a wider scale. Contributing to the death toll on the rural killing fields of 1919–1920 was the Soviets' idealism, since it permitted them to justify "massacres on the basis of class...with the claim that a new world was coming into being, and that everything was permitted to assist the difficult birth."

As one newspaper explained at the time, "Our morality has no precedent, and our humanity is absolute because it rests on a new ideal....To us, everything is permitted, for we are the first...to liberate humanity from its shackles.... Blood? Let blood flow like water!" According to Werth, these clashes with the independent peasantry opened the way for the exterminationist solutions of the early 1930s, when Stalin used hunger as an "objective ally" in his efforts to subdue the kulaks and collectivize agriculture.

Unfortunately, Werth and Margolin's contributions are the exception. The trouble with *The Black Book of Communism* does not end with the introduction. While there is no denying the atrocities visited on the victims of Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot, the book's treatment of communism in

Politics? Not in the Academy!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Latin America is so one-sided that it might as well be plucked from a U.S. State Department report. We are given the total count of war victims in Sandinista Nicaragua, but we are not told that most of those deaths were caused by the U.S.-funded contras, referred to here as the "anti-Sandinista resistance." In his treatment of Cuba, luridly titled "Interminable Totalitarianism in the Tropics," Pascal Fontaine describes Che Guevara as "dogmatic, cold, and intolerant...there was almost nothing in him of the traditionally open and warm Cuban temperament." Che was Argentine.

While conceding that in Batista's Cuba, an authoritarian, racist state where blacks were second-class citizens, "wealth remained unevenly distributed," Fontaine argues that Che was inspired not by the sight of social injustice but by his "passionate hatred for the United States." (Nowhere does Fontaine consider why Che's feelings toward his superpower neighbor might have been less than warm—the history of U.S. meddling in Cuba's internal affairs, for instance, or the Central Intelligence Agency–sponsored overthrow of Guatemala's democratic reformer Jacobo Arbenz in 1954, which haunted Cuban revolutionaries.) And, although he supplies important and disturbing information about Cuba's political prisons, Fontaine fails to mention the regime's achievements in health care, literacy, and education, which, while not excusing human rights abuses, at least help explain why the Cuban model long proved attractive to revolutionaries throughout Latin America and Africa.

In fact, the authors of *The Black Book of Communism* are unable to discern anything remotely redeeming about a cause that once inspired many people of conscience and that played a significant role in defeating both Nazism in Europe and apartheid in South Africa. Although communism was a catastrophe that perverted its followers' idealism, it sometimes honored that idealism—something that cannot be said of fascism.

Unfortunately, even Nicolas Werth succumbs to the gratuitous finger-pointing of the embittered ex-communist. His lament for the fate of the Vlasovtsky is particularly bizarre. Named after their leader, Andrei Vlasov, the Vlasovtsky were a group of Russian prisoners of war who defected to the German side in 1942. "On the basis of his anti-Stalinist convictions," writes Werth credulously, "Vlasov agreed to collaborate with the Nazis to free his country from the tyranny of the Bolsheviks." Vlasov paid with his life, and his 150,000 soldiers ended up wasting away in the gulag, an unhappy fate, to be sure. But it's hard to get worked up, as Werth does, over the imprisonment of traitors whose "anti-Stalinist convictions" led them to embrace the Nazis.

How is *The Black Book of Communism* going to play in post–Cold War America, awash in both fresh evidence of communist espionage and recently declassified documents revealing Washington's sponsorship of murderous dictatorships in Guatemala, Chile, and Indonesia? A quick survey of American scholars of communism suggests the book will not be quite the sensation it was in France. "It's always a sign of stupidity when you approach a big subject by playing the numbers game," says Arno Mayer, a historian at Princeton. "It just doesn't make any sense to conflate all these figures without the least attention to social, political, and cultural contexts." The Harvard historian Charles Maier, though more partial to the book's treatment of the communist experience, is also troubled by Courtois's use of numbers: "If you consider communism as a monolithic phenomenon, naturally you're going to get a higher body count. After all, there's only one Nazi regime, a regime created in the name of the German people and race, whereas communism is based on an ideology that claims universalism and extends from Russia to Vietnam, China, Cuba."

Still, the most common reaction will probably be "Shocked, shocked," to quote the weary Claude Rains in *Casablanca*. As Maier observes, there is something strangely provincial about this ostensibly global assault on communism: "What's curious to me is how the French discover the horrors of communism every twenty years or so. First it was the debate over the trials in the 1950s, then it was the film based on Arthur London's memoir *The Confession,* which the French intellectuals lined up dutifully to see. Then came the new philosophers, and, wow, they discovered this stuff was bad news. And now Courtois. So my first reaction in seeing this is to ask, 'What's new?'"

Maier is probably right, but the French discussion shows no signs of abating anytime soon. *The Black Book of Communism* has whipped French intellectuals into a frenzy of reflection over the meaning of the Bolshevik revolution, which is deeply intertwined in the memory of the left with their own Revolution of 1789. Spin-offs—"satellite books," *Le Monde* calls them—are either already here or on their way, including *Le Malheur du siècle, Twenty-Five Reflections on Totalitarianism in the Twentieth Century,* and, of course, *The Black Book of Capitalism.*

Adam Shatz is a contributing writer to *Lingua Franca*.

The Black Book of Communism was so enveloped in charges and countercharges that its contents risked becoming a casualty of all the publicity.

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Throwing It All Away

BY JOHN PALATTELLA

Waste and Want:
A Social History of Trash
by Susan Strasser
Metropolitan Books
355 pp. • $27.50 • September

IN THE SUMMER OF 1987, A barge called The *Mobro*, laden with more than thirty-one hundred tons of trash, wandered the Atlantic Ocean for fifty-five days, searching unsuccessfully for a place to dock and unload its cargo. Pundits and politicians were quick to exploit the symbolic value of the wayward vessel, which they christened the "garbage barge." *Newsweek* declared that the barge's journey signaled a "trash crisis" and warned that if Americans did not change their wasteful ways "dumps will cover the country coast to coast." In his 1988 State of the State address, New York governor Mario Cuomo delivered himself of a new rallying cry: "Remember the *Mobro*." The barge's symbolism even drifted into the murky waters of popular culture. "All I've been thinking about all week is garbage," confesses a housewife played by Andie MacDowell in the opening scene of the 1989 film *sex, lies, and videotape*. "I mean, I just can't stop thinking about it.... I've just gotten real concerned over what's gonna happen.... I started feeling this way...when that barge was stranded."

Garbage guilt hasn't always been a national pathology. In fact, as Susan Strasser reveals in *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash,* garbage was rare before the twentieth century because what little trash Americans did generate they recycled into something useful. Strasser, a professor of history at the University of Delaware, approaches garbage as a historian well acquainted with the minutiae of daily life. She is the author of two previous books about the intersection of household production and consumerism, *Never Done: A History of American Housework* and *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market.* In *Waste and Want,* she builds on that scholarship, explaining how the rise of consumerism at the turn of the century altered the ways that homemade goods and industrial products were treated at the end of their useful lives.

MICHAEL MURPHY

Waste and Want is a tale of decline. Strasser argues that the proliferation—and changing value—of trash over the last two centuries reflects the demise of a hardy, work-driven ethos and the rise of a profligate, consumption-based culture. Before the twentieth century, she explains, goods and money were scarce for most of the population, so saving and using scraps of any kind was essential. "The process was...generally cyclical, if not perfectly so," she observes. "Waste products were important to economic growth because they served as raw materials for other industrial processes." Households traded rags and bones to peddlers for teakettles and buttons; peddlers exchanged these rags and bones with manufacturers for domestic goods. Clothing was mended and remade; an adult's torn trousers became the raw material for a child's new coat. Food scraps were used as fertilizer or fed to livestock. In nineteenth-century Manhattan, Strasser notes, herds of pigs roamed the streets and "consumed so much garbage and furnished so much food for the poor that efforts to ban them ran into political opposition." Indeed, in his *American Notes,* published in 1842, Charles Dickens urged New Yorkers, "Take care of the pigs."

With the rise of consumerism, however, America's relationship to waste was fundamentally transformed. "Trash and trashmaking became integral to the economy in a whole new way: the growth of markets for new products came to depend in part on the continuous disposal of old things," Strasser writes. Instead of remaking old clothing, people discarded it or donated it to the Salvation Army or Goodwill Industries, both of which were established in the late nineteenth century. Commercial slaughterhouses, which sold tons of bone to fertilizer companies, put peddlers out of business. And manufacturers created a new kind of trash altogether: packaging. Consumers had little use for the cardboard cartons and cel-

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lophane wrappers that swaddled brand-name goods, so they threw the stuff out.

Contemplating this detritus, Strasser laments the loss of something more valuable than raw materials themselves. She thinks that a major trait—and failing—of consumer society is, as the cultural historian Jackson Lears puts it in *Fables of Abundance,* "not materialism but the spread of an indifference toward a material world where things are reduced to disposable commodities." In preindustrial America, Strasser contends, "mending and restoring objects often required more creativity than original production." The predominant attitude of most people toward trash was that of the *bricoleur*, "an odd-job man who works with his hands, employing the *bricoles*, the scraps or odds and ends." The countless ways that people reused trash reflected what Strasser calls a "kinesthetic knowledge of materials." Consumerism, she believes, has made such knowledge irrelevant. (Crucially, Strasser doesn't consider to what extent mass production and consumerism have liberated people—particularly women—from the drudgery of certain household tasks.)

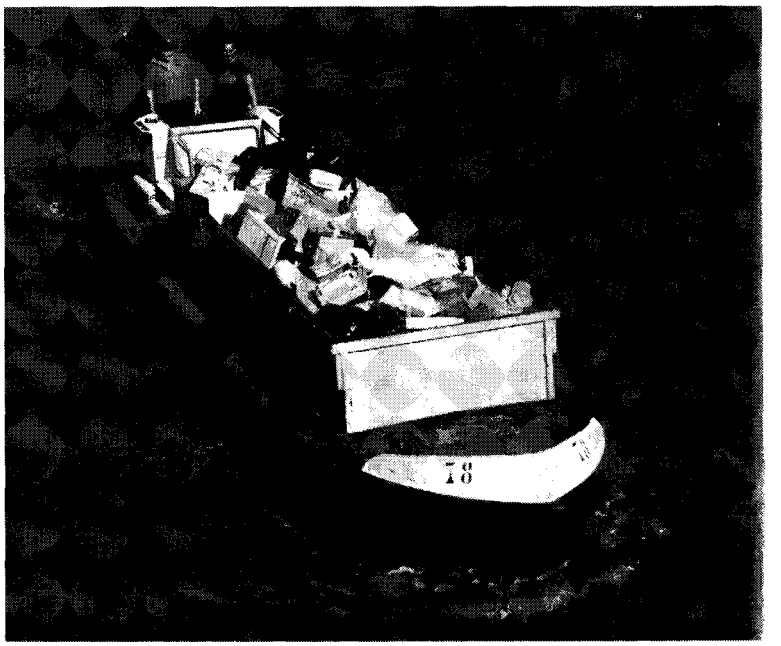
Most people today don't have designs on trash; instead, accustomed to treating anything old or worn as obsolete, they dump it into designer garbage bags. Even worse, those few habits of the *bricoleur* that haven't perished have been subordinated to the larger agenda of a throwaway society. Nineteenth-century peddlers who reused garbage "engaged in two-way relationships, paying for rags and old rubber with cash and credit," Strasser writes; late-twentieth-century households that recycle bottles and newspaper "just put the stuff on the curb, expecting nothing tangible back."

"What counts as trash depends on who's counting": Strasser is speaking figuratively, but for all its observations about our throwaway society, *Waste and Want* contains scant data about garbage. In certain respects, this lack of hard facts is unsurprising. Garbage is ephemeral, after all; it disappears from one day or week to the next, which makes it hard to track the volume and variety of what people discard. And while refuse haulers and city sanitation officials have collected data on solid waste since the early twentieth century, thes e data are difficult to interpret. Until recently, solid waste was measured by weight, not volume. In 1990, a group of garbologists from the University of Arizona's Garbage Project devised volume-to-weight ratios that enable comparison of landfill contents. Still, as the head of the Garbage Project, William Rathje, explains, comparison by ratio is imperfect because, due to climate and other conditions in landfills, "the very same types of garbage vary enormously in both weight and volume from place to place."

Even trickier to gather is information about garbage in the nineteenth century. Then, refuse accumulated in marginal places—dumps, outbuildings, alleyways—where it was handled by marginal people like ragpickers. "Marginal people leave few records," Strasser writes, "and scholars who study them often find that the most accessible sources—the writings and records of élites *about* marginal groups—offer more enlightenment about the writers than dependable analysis of their subjects. Thus the swill children"—kids who roamed the streets collecting food scraps to sell to farmers for fertilizer or hog food—"are described in a book about the 'dangerous classes' of nineteenth-century New York."

In another respect, the scarcity of data about garbage in *Waste and Want* is typical of Strasser's method as a historian. She likens herself to a ragpicker in the archives, scavenging through periodical indexes for scraps of information about trash. The result is a patchwork of stories and observations about a throwaway society written not from the ground up but from the top down. Strasser relies heavily on trade magazines like *Modern Packaging* and *Waste Trade Journal,* slicks like *Good Housekeeping* and *Metropolitan Home,* and household manuals like *The American Frugal Housewife* and *The Home-Maker and Her Job.* As a result, she doesn't use trash to document the gradual development of consumerism in everyday life so much as she traces the views of a professional class of social managers and opinion makers, whose attitudes toward waste she regards as a fairly accurate index of society's as a whole.

STRASSER'S HABIT OF teasing broad cultural patterns from scraps of data is a big liability when her history becomes jeremiad and she claims that the rise of consumerism has spawned a severe garbage crisis in the United States. Late in the study, Strasser points out that from 1970 to 1993, the amount of trash (after recycling) that had to be disposed of increased from 3 to 3.4 pounds per person per day. This is an interesting figure, but note that she



CORBIS-BETTMANN

Newsweek declared that the barge's journey signaled a garbage crisis, and warned that if Americans did not change their wasteful ways "dumps will cover the country coast to coast."

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doesn't break down the contents of that four tenths of a pound of garbage; it's unclear what percentage is paper, food waste, glass, plastic, or metal — or even what percentage is biodegradable. It's illogical, then, for her to suggest that this slight per-capita increase signals that "Americans take the word of companies that make razors, batteries, toothbrushes, and processed food, throwing away the old one when the manufacturer says it's time to buy again." In fact, as the garbologist Rathje discovered in his excavation of nine landfills in the 1980s and early 1990s, what one is most likely to extract from the steamy depths of a landfill is not a razor or toothbrush but the remains of a newspaper or magazine. Over the last two and a half decades, Rathje reports, the volume of paper in landfills has risen from 30 to 40 percent, while the volume of plastic has hovered at a little less than 16 percent since the 1970s. Glass, metal, food waste, and construction and demolition debris account for the remaining volume of trash.

What one is most likely to extract from a landfill is not a razor or toothbrush but the remains of a paper or magazine.

Given Strasser's tendency to see a mounting garbage crisis in a discarded tin can, it's hardly a surprise that she thinks the odyssey of the *Mobro* in 1987 was a "harbinger of things to come." This interpretation couldn't be more wrong. The *Mobro*'s trek was the result of an unusual entrepreneurial gamble gone awry. The barge's bales of refuse belonged to an Alabama businessman, Lowell Harrelson, who wanted to convert the waste to methane gas for commercial energy use. Harrelson's plan was no crackpot scheme: At the time of the *Mobro* incident, the Brooklyn Union Gas Company was using methane captured at the three-thousand-acre Fresh Kills landfill on Staten Island to provide heating and cooking gas to ten thousand families. Harrelson had purchased the garbage from New York City and several Long Island suburbs, but his conversion plan never materialized because none of the six East Coast states and three Caribbean countries he approached would permit him to off-load the garbage into a landfill where, after paying a fee, he could capture methane. At the time, some environmental alarmists thought the garbage hazardous—why else would it have been turned away from port to port?—but their fears were unfounded. The bulk of the trash was paper.

Harrelson ended up burning his investment in an incinerator in Brooklyn and paying to haul away the resulting four hundred tons of ash to a landfill—in Islip, Long Island. Rather than seizing on the purported symbolism of the garbage barge, Strasser should have given Harrelson a place in *Waste and Want* next to her esteemed peddlers, who were also determined to wring as much economic value as possible from trash. Remember the *Mobro*.

John Palattella is an associate editor of *University Business* and a frequent contributor to *Lingua Franca*.

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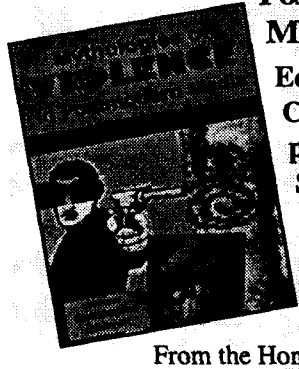

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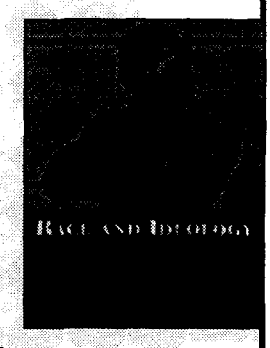

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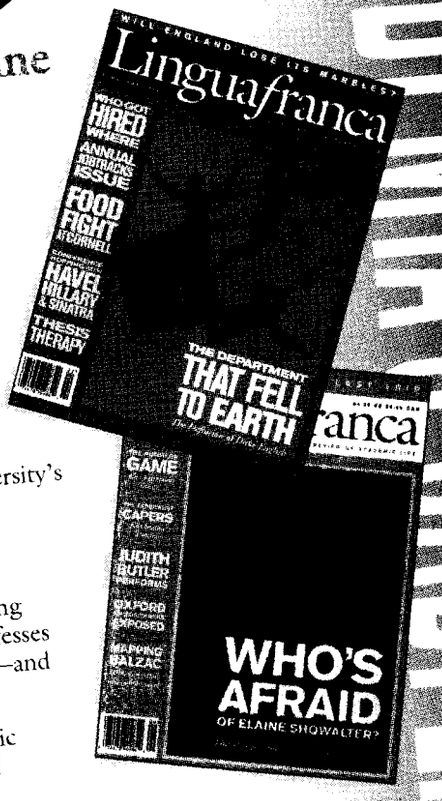

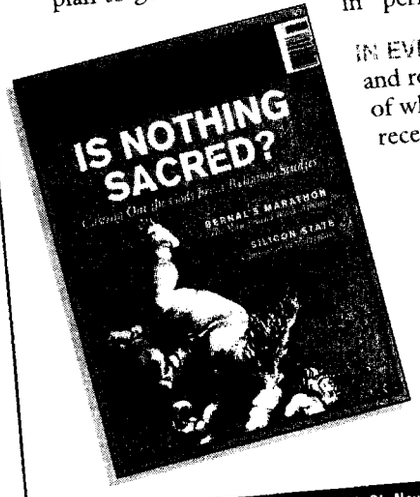

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The Sounds of Silence

BY LAURA SECOR

The Culture of Power in Serbia: Nationalism and the Destruction of Alternatives
By Eric D. Gordy
Penn State Press
230 pp. • $19.95 • September

IN THE YEARS BEFORE NATO demolished Belgrade's government buildings and power plants, visitors often remarked on the city's unremarkable architecture. A twentieth-century metropolis, Belgrade's historical significance is negligible, even to the Serbs. Rebecca West, surely the century's foremost Serbophile, found little to recommend this town at the confluence of the Danube and Sava Rivers; and even the last *Blue Guide* to Yugoslavia, published in 1989, devotes barely eight of its four hundred pages to the nation's capital.

But at century's end, Belgrade has gripped the public imagination: Journalists have fashioned it as a modern-day Sodom, a darkly fascinating city of the damned. From the cover of *The New York Times Magazine* to the pages of *The New Yorker* and even in new Serbian films like *Cabaret Balkan* and *The Wounds,* Belgrade's mean streets have become metaphors for violence, careless cruelty, and moral debasement. As for the Serb people, according to *The New Republic,* they are nothing more or less than MILOSEVIC'S WILLING EXECUTIONERS, collectively responsible for the rape of Kosovo. Scholars like Branimir Anzulovic, the author of *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide* (NYU 1999), argue that this murderous pathology is in fact the inevitable outcome of Serbian culture—a culture that has also, by the by, produced generations of peaceable pig farmers.

The notion of Serbian collective guilt did not have this sort of currency when Clark University sociologist Eric D. Gordy researched *The Culture of Power in Serbia,* a study of politics, media, music, and material conditions under Milosevic from 1994 to 1995. Although Gordy did the bulk of his fieldwork five years ago (during the Bosnian war), the book appears at a fortuitous time: Against the sanctimoniousness of the voyeurs and the determinists, Gordy poses a complex portrait of a shattered society. It is not that Serbs have offered no resistance to the politics of nationalist authoritarianism. Rather, the political and cultural resistance some Serbs have mustered has been suffocated by the regime's strong-arm tactics, as well as by international isolation, a twilight-zone economy, and a reckless and unprincipled political opposition.

The Belgrade that emerges from Gordy's study is a less diabolically glamorous city than the one the American media love to hate. It is also more profoundly depressing. Gordy's favorite metaphor—one he heard from many of his research subjects—is of darkness: not just moral darkness but the darkness of a stagnated and stifled culture, of enforced ignorance of global and even local events, of isolation, and of a city subject to frequent power outages. The Serbs in Gordy's book are a world-weary bunch. Many of them resist the encroaching darkness with street protests, independent newspapers, wry humor, and pacifist rock music, only to be paralyzed and defeated by tear gas, censorship, and the ubiquitous regime-sponsored "neofolk" and "turbofolk" music.

What, then, of the electorate that supports the Milosevic regime? Gordy reminds us that Milosevic's party has never won more than a bare plurality of the Serbian vote—in 1993, this amounted to only 36.7 percent. A credible, united opposition might have defeated Milosevic years ago, but Serbian politics has spawned no such thing. According to Gordy's research, Milosevic's voters are mostly middle-aged, rural, poorly educated, and resistant to change. Back in 1987, Milosevic seized power not through an election but through "an intraparty coup" within the communist bureaucracy. In a country with an uninterrupted history of authoritarian rule, the illusion of continuity can be comforting. Gordy finds that many Serbs uphold the regime "from habit rather than from belief—paradoxically justifying support for Milosevic on the ground that 'we lived well under Tito.'" He cites a famous anecdote in which the opposition candidate Vuk Draskovic explains his views to a very amenable peasant. But the peasant does not say he will vote for Draskovic. "But you agreed with me about everything," says a confused Draskovic. "'Yes, I did,' the peasant answers, 'and when you are in power, I will vote for you.'"

If the Serbian electorate suffers from self-defeating inertia, social and economic turmoil has not helped matters. Gordy's research period covers a spell of surreal hyperinflation. By January of 1994,

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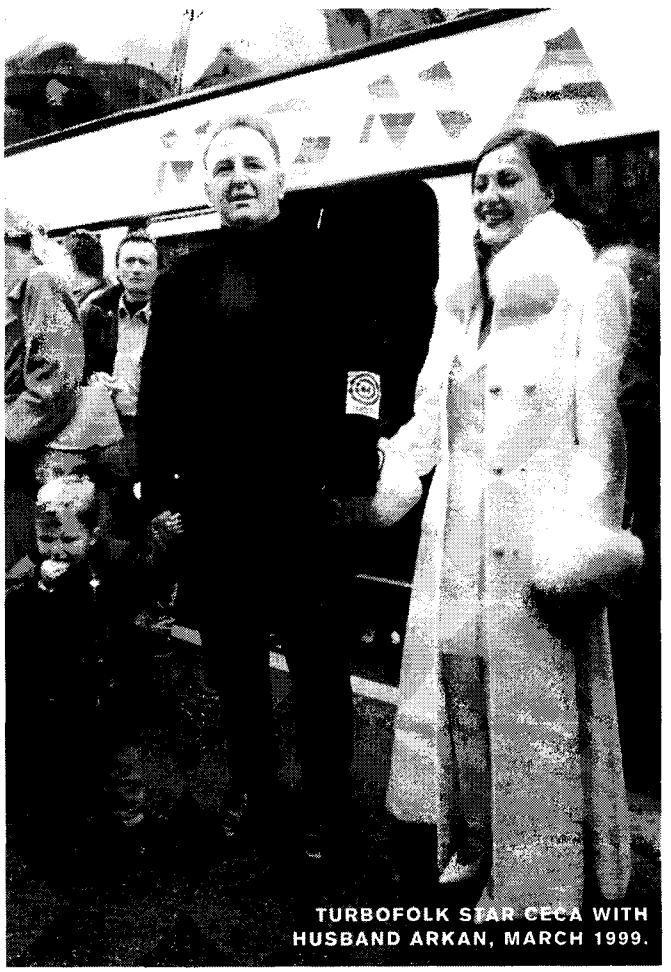
the monthly inflation rate reached 313,563,558 percent, sending the price of a kilogram of potatoes up to eight trillion dinars. That year, 82 percent of Serbs spent more than half their incomes on food. Virtually the entire population was plunged into poverty. Most citizens sold off their hard-currency savings; previously prosperous Serbs found themselves without basic goods. At the same time, a glamorous life opened up to a small criminal elite that had profited from war, disruption, and the black market.

GORDY'S STRONGEST and most original material is about the role of music in this culture of chaos, decadence, and defeat. In the 1980s, he recounts, Yugoslavia produced a homegrown rock scene comparable to that of western European countries. Indeed, its denizens, known locally as *rokeri,* saw themselves as participants in an international youth culture. But the *rokeri* were mostly educated urbanites from Zagreb, Sarajevo, and Belgrade. When Yugoslavia splintered, so did the rock-and-roll market. Most Serbian rock bands and their listeners remained staunchly antiwar and anti-Milosevic; one band adopted the name Partibrejkers to express its opposition to the ruling party, and Belgrade's three most popular rock bands together recorded an antiwar song called "Listen Here (Peace, Brother, Peace)." But as cosmopolitan urbanites, the *rokeri* were precisely the demographic group that interested Milosevic least. The regime's task was simply to keep them quarantined from its power base, which consisted mostly of peasants and recent rural migrants into Belgrade.

Conveniently, many of Milosevic's supporters shared a taste for neofolk music, a hybrid of traditional Serbian folk sounds, contemporary (often nationalist) lyrics, and, sometimes, pop instrumentation. Gordy compares neofolk to country-and-western in the United States: A clear class boundary divides its listeners from the *rokeri,* who view neofolk as embarrassing lowbrow kitsch. Courting rural supporters, regime-controlled television and radio stations pumped neofolk over the airwaves as the country prepared for war.

With the regime's support, neofolk evolved a faddish variant for younger listeners: turbofolk. Performed by scantily clad young women, this techno-dance version of neofolk preserves a minimal resemblance to traditional Serbian folk music (it actually sounds considerably more like Turkish techno-pop). Its lyrics are not overtly nationalist or even political. Rather, the *turbasi,* as they are called, concern themselves with tragic love affairs and material bounty. Nonetheless, their association with the criminal elite is obvious. At a time when international sanctions, hyperinflation, and fiscal mismanagement had wrecked the Serbian economy, one turbofolk tune exclaimed, "Coca-Cola, Marlboro, Suzuki / Discotheques, guitars, and bouzouki / That's life, that's not an ad / Nobody has it better than us." Turbofolk stars even performed benefit programs for the paramilitary groups pillaging Bosnia. If any doubts remained about the *turbasi*'s allegiances, they were dispelled when the turbofolk star Svetlana Velickovic-Ceca married the notorious gangster and paramilitary commander known as Arkan in a lavish public celebration that the regime televised, hyped, and later marketed on videotape.

Turbofolk is the music of Serbia's paramilitary gangs. But nationalist intellectuals deplore its unmistakably Middle Eastern sound.



TURBOFOLK STAR CECA WITH HUSBAND ARKAN, MARCH 1999.

TOMISLAV PETERNEK/SYGMA

Belgrade's *rokeri* disdain neofolk, but they positively revile turbofolk. Said one of Gordy's respondents, "It hurts my soul to hear that kind of music." Another went so far as to call it "the symbol of all the evil in this society." And the *rokeri* are not alone: Serbia's nationalist intellectuals see turbofolk as a bastardization of true folk traditions. Worse, they deplore its unmistakably Middle Eastern sound. The opposition representative Pavle Aksentijevic played for the Serbian parliament a tape of an Iranian pop song and a tape of a Serbian turbofolk facsimile. "We Serbs sometimes behave as if we were begotten by drunken Turks," he lamented. Gordy counterposes a quip from the Serbian cultural critic Ivan Colovic: "We are all a little bit Turkish. But I am not sure that is the worst thing about us."

At the time of the Dayton Accords in 1995, the Milosevic regime was eager to distance itself from the Bosnian Serbs and their supporters. The *turbasi* the government had once supported "suddenly became embarrassing and perhaps even threatening" to

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Milosevic as he repositioned himself as the key to peace in the Balkans. The regime launched a laughable ad campaign for high culture: "It's nicer with culture," the commercials proclaimed, without intimating how the viewer should act on this advice. For its own reasons, the political opposition welcomed the regime's rejection of neofolk. But in the end, the government was unable to slay the beast it had created: Turbofolk culture persists without regime sponsorship, just as rock and roll did before it. The Serbian regime, writes Gordy, "has acted—twice—to destroy cultural alternatives in the field of music. Instead it has produced resentful remnants."

"Resentful remnants" are in some respects the theme of Gordy's book. His discussion of the "destruction of information alternatives" ends with a severely constrained independent media that the regime cannot squelch but that smolders in near isolation. Unfortunately, Gordy's observation period predated the Internet revolution (although Gordy himself maintains an impressive array of Serbian links on his faculty Web page). Serbs have made extensive and ingenious use of the Web—to disseminate propaganda during the war with NATO; to protect and nurture independent journalistic voices; to distribute short Serbian films, war diaries, radio broadcasts, video clips, and music despite the international blockade; and to access foreign news sources. The availability of information on the Internet underscores a question that Gordy raises in his discussion of television and newspapers: Why does a significant proportion of the Serbian public still choose to trust government media over other accessible sources, including their own independent media?

Unfortunately for scholars, there is so much breaking news in the Balkans that studies of the area are almost instantly dated. For instance, the Belgrade independent press has recently caught wind of a rumor that Milosevic plans to appoint neofolk star Zorica Brunclik minister of culture. Needless to say, the urbanites are outraged. One well-known Serbian film director, Srdjan Karanovic, jokes that although he was initially shocked by the news, he now suspects Brunclik has been in charge of Serbian culture all along.

The Culture of Power in Serbia is a somewhat misleading title for Gordy's book, which deals almost exclusively with one city (Belgrade) over a period of two years (1994–1995). But Gordy has found a great wealth of material in that place at that time, and his analysis is not only shrewd but scrupulously nuanced. Gordy's Belgrade is perhaps best described by a rock critic who reviews a concert delayed for hours by one of the city's frequent blackouts: "We are here and now, things do not come easily for us, but that is the way it is. Belgrade is a dark forest with no end. You are in it. Pay attention to yourself and to those near you because all kinds of things happen in the dark."

Laura Secor is senior editor of *Lingua Franca*. Her article "Testaments Betrayed: Yugoslavian Intellectuals and the Road to War" appeared in the September issue.

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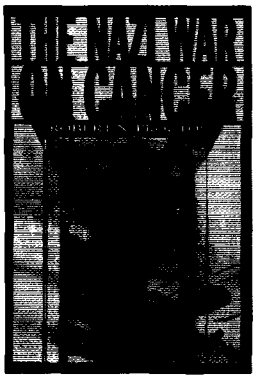

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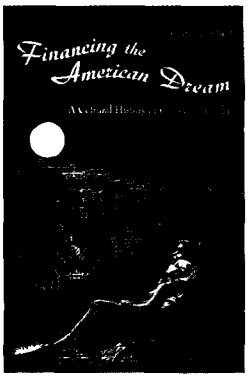

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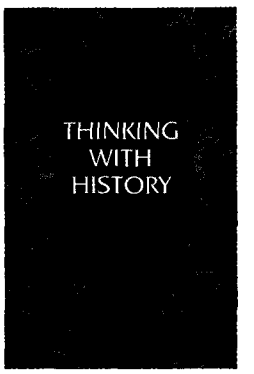

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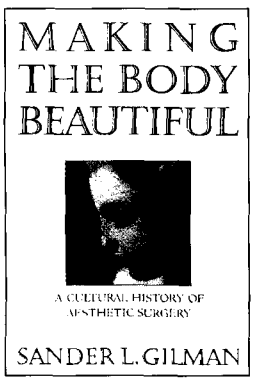

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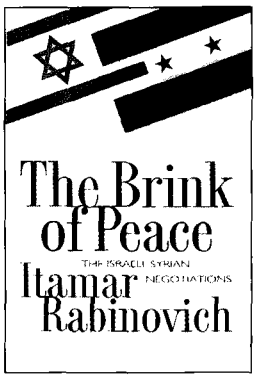

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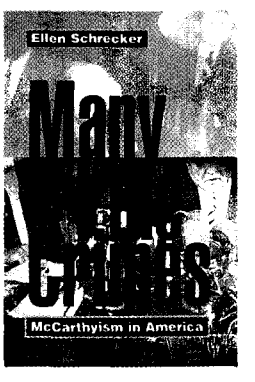

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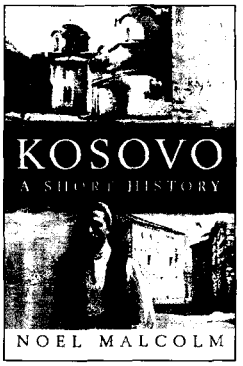

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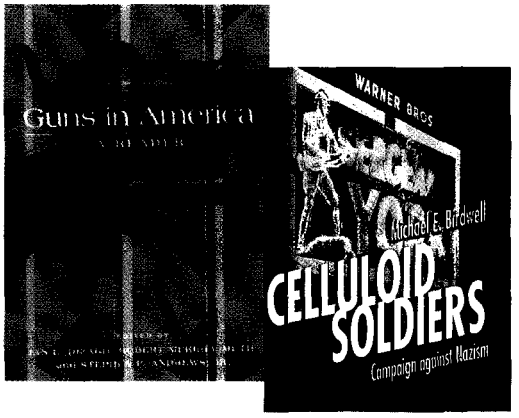

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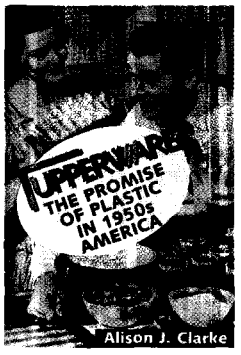

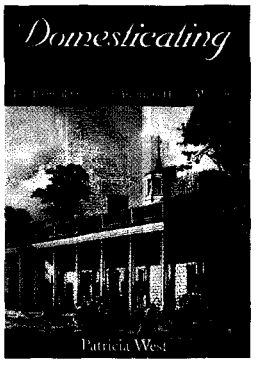

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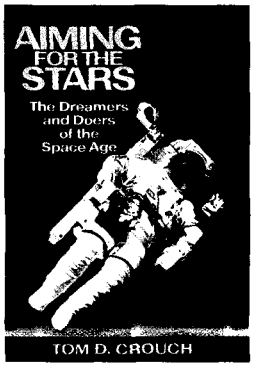

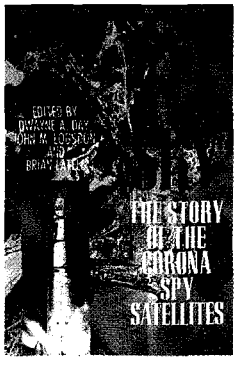

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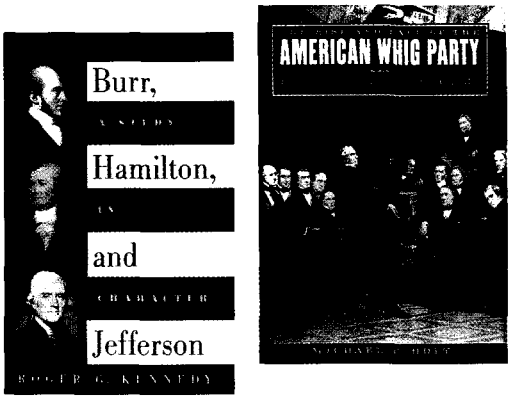

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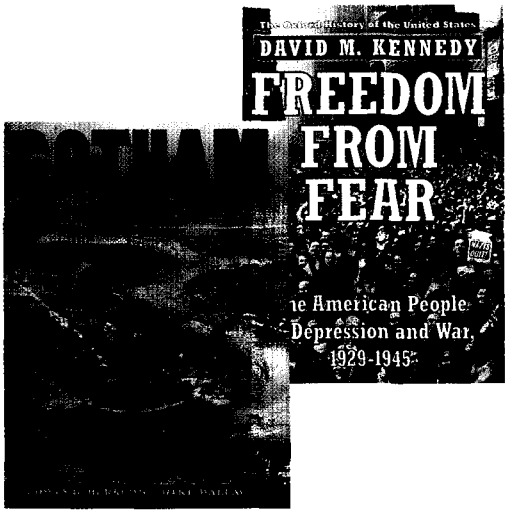

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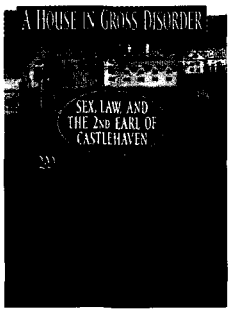

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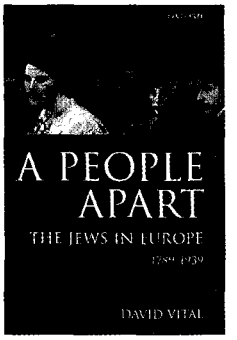

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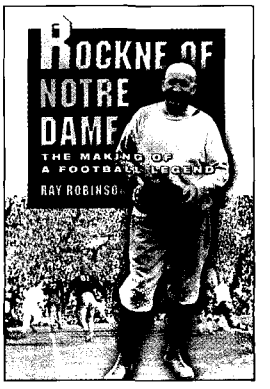

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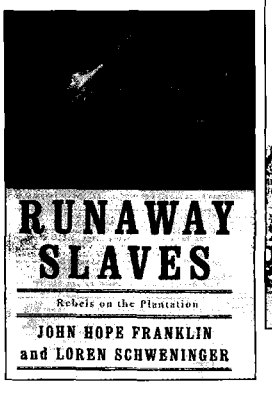

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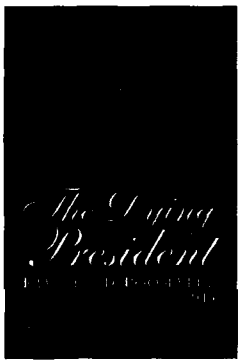

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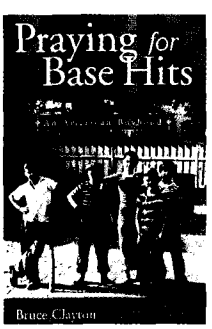

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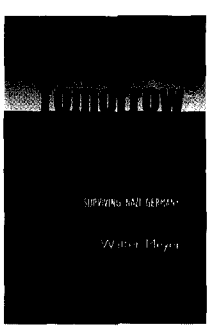

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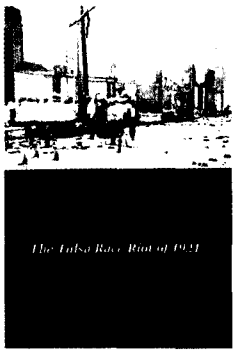

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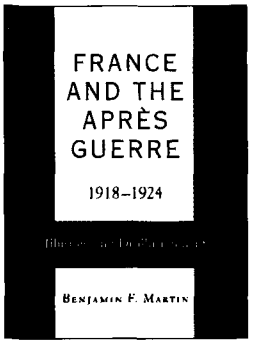

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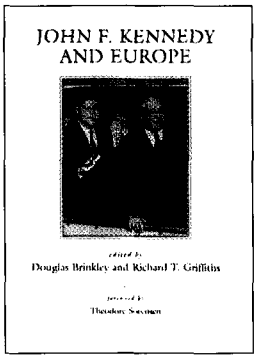

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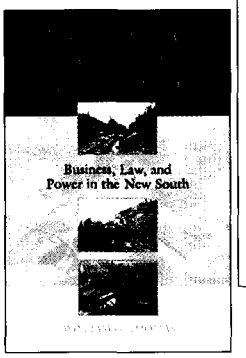

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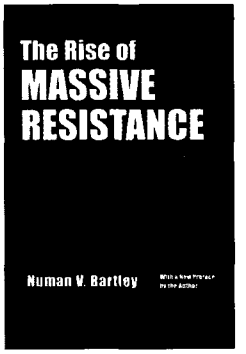

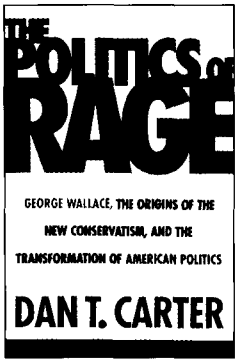
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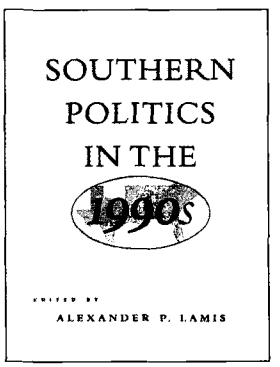

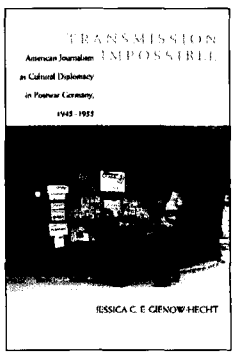

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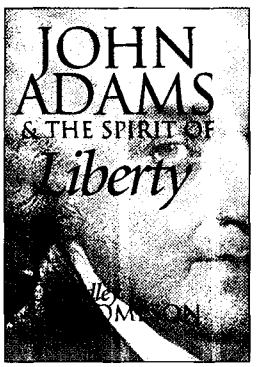

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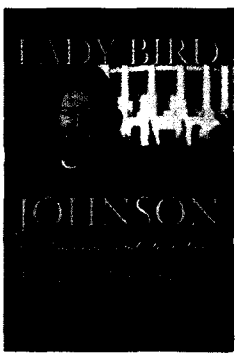

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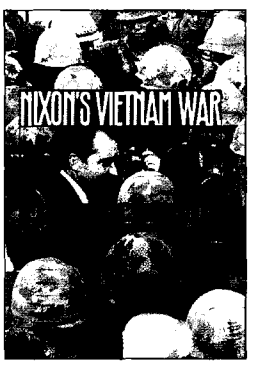

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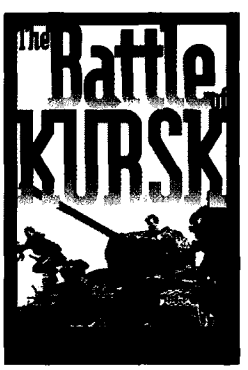

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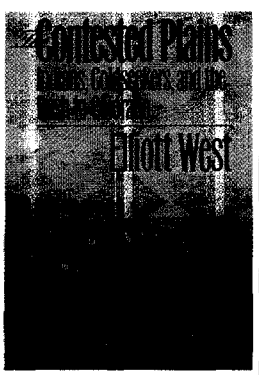

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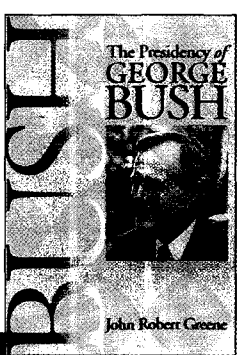

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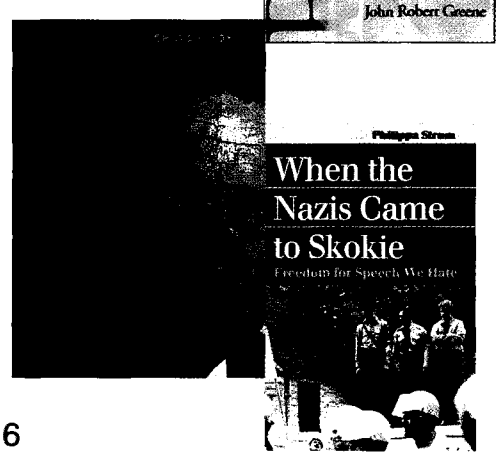

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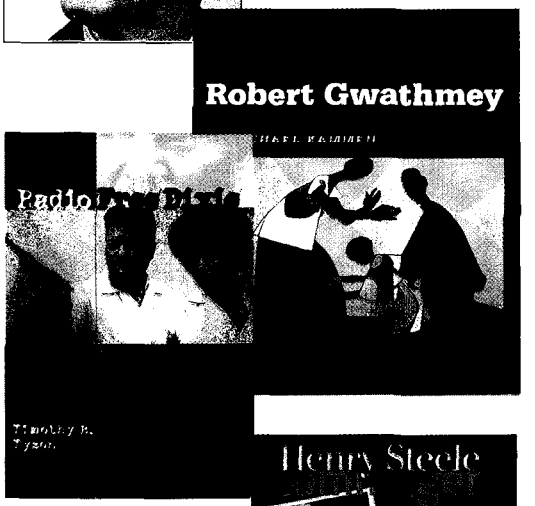

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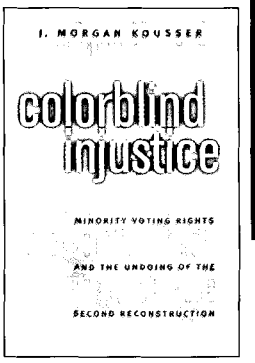

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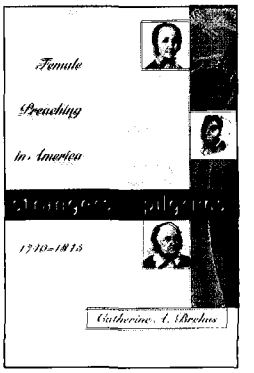

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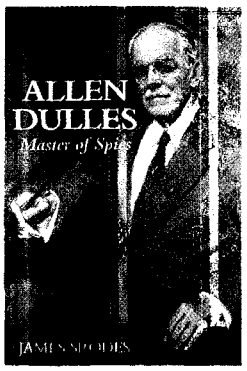

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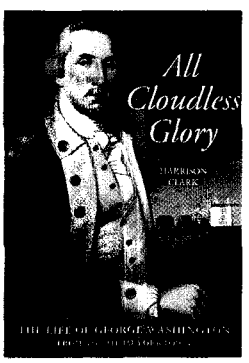

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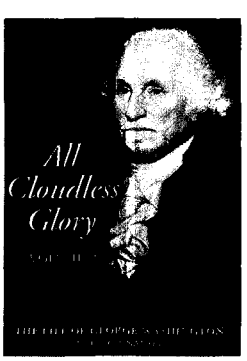

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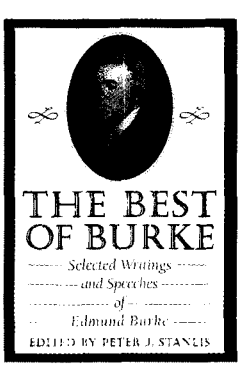

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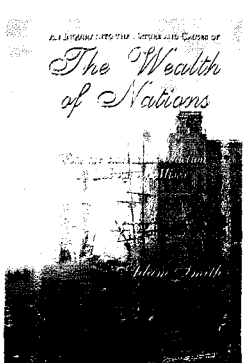

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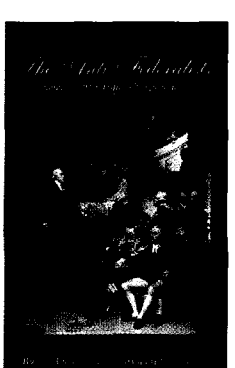

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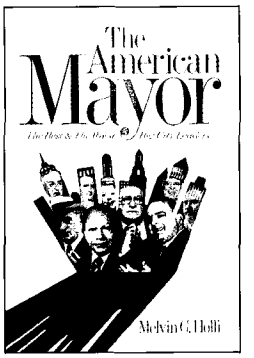

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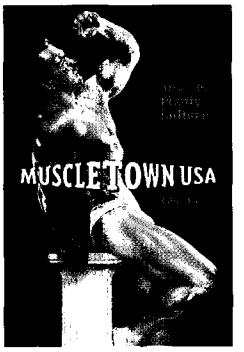

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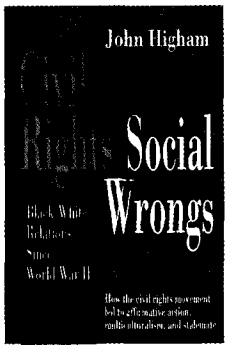

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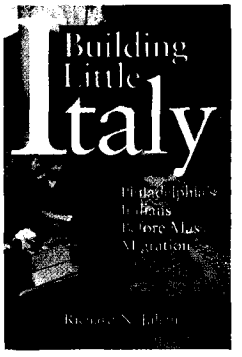

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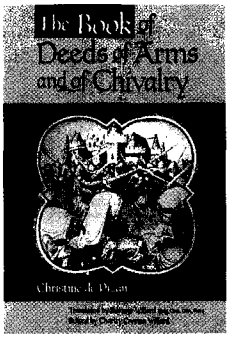

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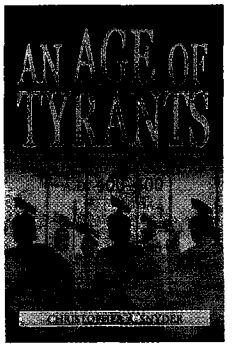

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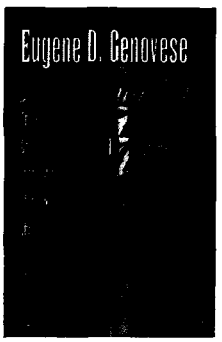

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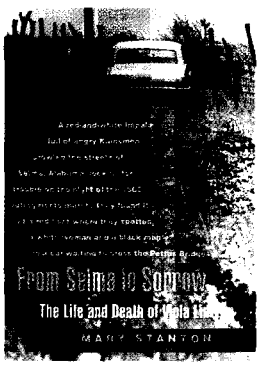

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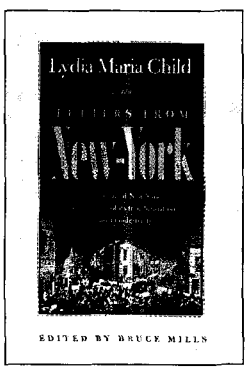

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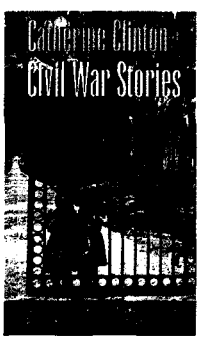

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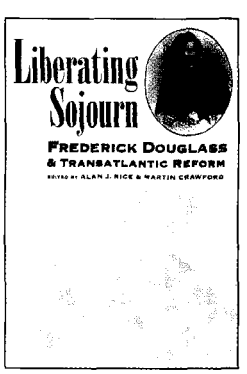

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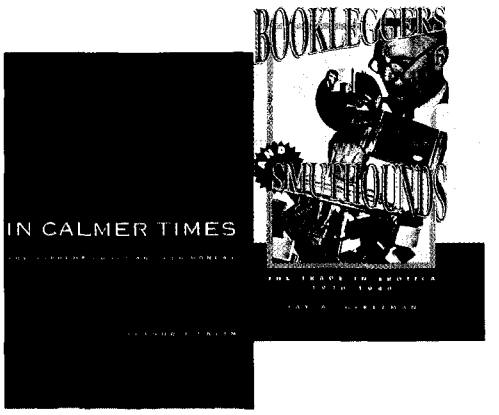

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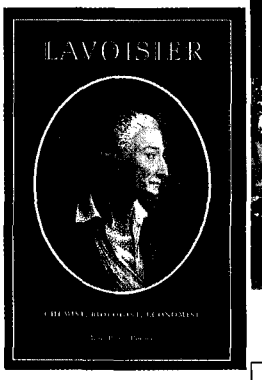

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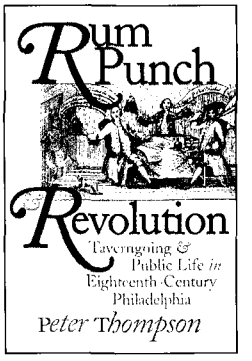

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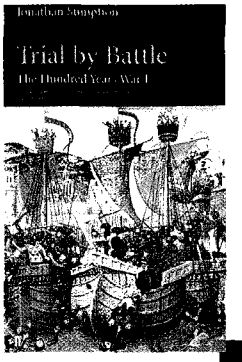

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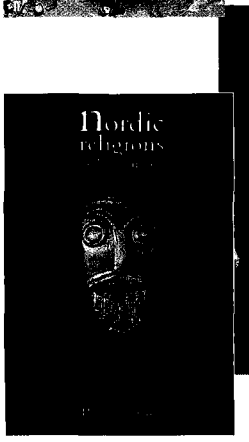

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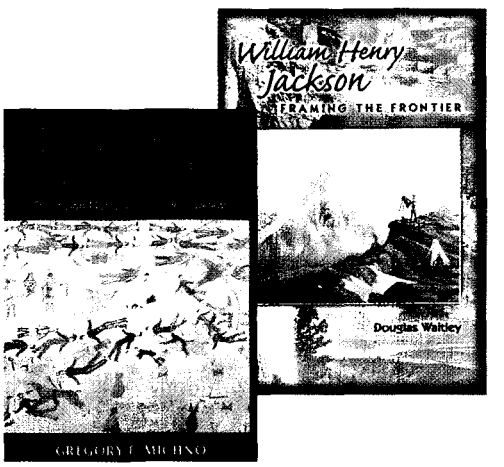

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Today's Woman

BY RUTH SHALIT

IN OCTOBER 1995, GARY Fethke, the dean of the College of Business at the University of Iowa, ran into a colleague, Donald McCloskey, in the hallway of the business school. McCloskey, Fethke noticed, was wearing gold ear studs—small, but on both ears. "What's this, Don?" Fethke asked jovially. "The earrings! Have you turned gay?"

"You want to know, Gary?" McCloskey asked. When Fethke nodded yes, McCloskey, a renowned free-market economist and married father of two, motioned him into his office and shut the door. He then unburdened himself of a startling secret: At age fifty-two, after years of closeted cross-dressing, he had come to the conclusion that he needed to become a woman. And so, the economics professor explained to his astounded dean, he had embarked on a course of hormone therapy, designed to swell his breasts and alter his voice. Over the course of the next year, he intended to become a physical woman: full beard electrolysis, eyebrow bones ground down, gender reassignment surgery. At that very moment, McCloskey confessed, underneath his sensible brown oxfords and argyle socks, his toenails gleamed candy-apple red.

Dean Fethke sat stunned for a moment, then rushed to put McCloskey at ease. "Thank God," he exclaimed. "I thought for a moment you were going to confess to converting to socialism."

Donald—now known as Deirdre—McCloskey recounts this story in *Crossing,* a tautly crafted memoir of her transition from Don McCloskey, conservative Chicago school economist, to Deirdre McCloskey, power shopper, domestic superachiever, and campy doyenne of difference feminism.

DEIRDRE MCCLOSKEY

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As a quantifying economist, Donald McCloskey couldn't help viewing a possible sex-change operation as a matter of utilitarian calculus. And so he gamely drew up a balance sheet, which he labeled "The Costs and Benefits of Womanhood." The costs, Donald recognized, were substantial: loss of his career, loss of his wife and daughter, loss of his birth family. "My mother in particular would be unable to handle it," Donald wrote at the time. "My son, I think, would continue to love me.... My sister would be fine."

As Deirdre ruefully notes midway through her memoir, almost every single one of these calculations proved mistaken—"the opposite of what happened." Conservative economists acted like tolerant sophisticates, while radical feminists reacted with scorn, accusing the bejeweled Deirdre of promoting a stereotyped view of womanhood. Donald's family, meanwhile, fractured and fell apart. His wife left him; both his son and his daughter cut him off completely. His sister, a liberal professor of psychology at Harvard, contrived to have him committed for insanity. His seventy-four-year-old mother, on the other hand, proved a pillar of support and good cheer. Upon seeing her son in full feminine regalia—denim skirt, white formal blouse, heels—Mrs. McCloskey didn't bat an eye. "Goodness!" she said. "But you shouldn't wear rings on every finger." Donald agreed and took some off, though he "loved rings." Later, she gave him one of her handbags.

IN HIS MOST CELEBRATED book, *The Rhetoric of Economics,* Donald McCloskey showed how the language of market exchange could be used expansively, as a metaphor for understanding civilizations and social conflict and all the organizing structures of human life. A main theme of Deirdre McCloskey's book, however, is the inadequacy of economic rhetoric to capture the often complex and obscure motives

Crossing: A Memoir
By Deirdre McCloskey
University of Chicago Press
266 pp. • $25.00 • November

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of real people in the real world. As the book unfolds, the botched balance sheet becomes a kind of synecdoche for Deirdre's disenchantment with classical economics, her conviction that the messy contingencies of existence cannot be summed up in the pinched, prudential calculus of cost and benefit. "Economists, whether conservative or radical, think the answer to a 'why' question is always 'some material advantage,'" she writes. "Economists don't seem too smart about identity."

Of course, McCloskey needn't have changed genders to arrive at this important insight. In the last decade, as McCloskey surely knows, theorists such as Gary Becker and Amartya Sen have done pioneering work in the non-pecuniary aspects of economics, showing how non-monetary incentives—status, identity, altruism—can be used as variables in calculating the utility function.

But if gender crossers are indeed utility maximizers, if there is no contradiction between the identity-seeking and the utility-seeking function, Deirdre hardly feels herself the rational consumer as she languishes in a hospital bed in Melbourne. "My life is so complicated. I am so alone: My son and probably my daughter have abandoned me; my wife, who could have been a true friend, and my sister, who could at least have been a sister, have turned against me. I feel so alone. I cried and cried." The decision to undergo gender-reassignment surgery—a physically grueling experience, which McCloskey describes with clinical frankness—is indeed inexplicable in terms of cost and benefit. "The 'decision' was not utilitarian," Deirdre writes. "My gender crossing was motivated by identity, not by a balance sheet of utility." He—she—simply was.

Armed with a new larynx and wardrobe, Deirdre McCloskey sets out to acquire "a woman's academic style," one that is self-deprecating, egalitarian, based on principles of "reciprocal self-disclosure." Noticing that "men are always seizing the conversational initiative, establishing hierarchies," she tells herself she must learn to "listen...support the speaker, maintain eye contact." She is happiest, she says, when she is among her girlfriends, trading emotional confessions and personal tales. "It was an advantage Deirdre had in making women friends, since she had bizarre things to tell (and no compunction about telling them) and plenty of crises to be helped through," McCloskey writes. On a trip through Chicago, she calls on a favored former student but finds that she has little in common with him, preferring instead to cozy up on the couch with his wife, Patty: "Patty's husband was astonished, amused, tolerant, a little disturbed: here was his tough-guy professor, crying with Patty about little miseries and joys. Big ones, too."

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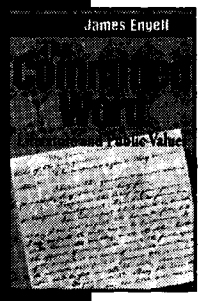

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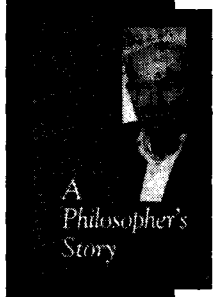

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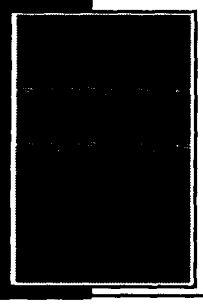

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One night, as her newfound woman friends gather around her supper table, baring their souls over broccoli with Brie and tagliatelle, Deirdre has an epiphany. "That's how to find a woman's academic style," she muses. "Among women." Deirdre puts this insight into practice several weeks later, when she is inaugurated as the president of the Economic History Association. Instead of mingling with the male professors in the main hall, where the air is thick with "exchanges of salient fact and lofty opinion and What I Just Accomplished," she spends her time lunching with other women, out on the pool veranda, "trading minor confidences" and "laughing at herself." At the conference, McCloskey pridefully notes, Deirdre "commented on papers or presented her own papers in a professional girl economist style.... She had started to forget what it was like to be a man."

What can Professor McCloskey mean by a "professional girl economist style?" The poolside chatelaine clearly has in mind no conventional feminization-of-power anthem, but something a touch more frilly. For McCloskey, as it turns out, is not just a girl economist but a girlie-girl economist, partial to square dances and pajama parties and other displays of crinoline frivolity. "Perfume...she always wears it," Deirdre writes, referring to herself, as she often does, in the third person. "She gets as much pleasure from loving as from being loved, delighting in caring for her new Yorkshire terrier named Janie." She revels in her nurturant relationship with the universe, claiming a special capacity to help ordinary folk with their problems: "She loves, just loves, the little favors of womankind, getting a card for someone, making meat loaf for Charles up the street, helping someone through a day of his life." With motherly concern, she proffers makeup tips, wrings her hands over bad-hair days and dispenses housekeeping advice: A single woman, she says, should "keep her apartment clean, and will engage in little ceremonies, such as bringing out the best china."

All this Scotchgard perfectionism can get a little trying, coming from someone who, as recently as a few years ago, had to be reminded not to leave his wet socks on the floor. Indeed, if Donald was a blustery tough guy, known for his boorish machismo, Deirdre can be a bit of a prig. When she goes to the coffeepot at the office one morning and finds it empty, she waxes righteous about the unmanageability of men. "Some man has poured out the last cup at 9:30 a.m. and walked away," she huffs. "The truth about men: they believe in the coffee-making fairy. Brewed coffee, like ironed shirts or birthday parties for the kids, is a natural phenomenon."

If Deirdre McCloskey tends to romanticize the goodness of women—to exaggerate their strength, their bravery, their vitality, and their connectedness—it's not hard to understand why. Donald McCloskey, by her account, was not just a standard-issue straight male but a particularly thrusting and macho specimen, a strapping six-footer with a taste for touch football and beer. In stripping away the accretion of maleness—in performing womanhood, as she calls it—Deirdre faced a particularly cruel challenge. Though eager to pass as female, she is constantly smoked out by cruel shop clerks tipped off by her big hands, her suspiciously husky voice, and the thick wrinkles around her mouth.

> As a quantifying economist, Donald McCloskey couldn't help viewing a possible sex-change operation as a matter of utilitarian calculus.

Given this punishing social context, it's no wonder McCloskey turns to Deborah Tannen, whose 1993 ode to the relational woman, *You Just Don't Understand*, is treated here as an unimpeachable touchstone, a Baedeker of 1990s womanhood. Recalling an awkward faculty dinner, McCloskey writes that he "applied Tannen...Without changing his tone, he adopted women's rules for conversation." If, in deploying stereotypically feminine gestures and turns of phrase, McCloskey is perpetuating offensive clichés, so be it, she writes. Better tired stereotypes than detection as an ex-man, and scorn.

McCloskey is less sympathetic when she uses her own remarkable story as the basis for sweeping generalizations about how men and women "are." Having experienced the social construction of gender first hand, she feels free to promote an extremely narrow and constricted view of what it means to be a woman, or a man.

"[Men] don't get it, this matter of life and friendship," she blithely announces. Whereas "the thoughts of most men about their relationships are first drafts, not considered and revised, women think all day about their relationships." She knows this, she says, because, as Deirdre, she "cares about relationships and devotes sustained thought to them in a way that Donald could not." To anxious friends of Donald's who want to believe that Deirdre is "just the same person," McCloskey has a ready response. "I'm not Good Old Don," she writes. "I am, so to speak, Don's smarter sister."

But women are not always smarter, humbler, more collaborative, or less interested in their careers than men. And not all human conflicts are necessarily reducible to a battle of the sexes. In the book's saddest moment, Donald informs his wife of his plans to become a woman, and she weeps and rages. Now, with the benefit of womanly hindsight, Deirdre believes she understands why. Donald's wife was upset because "women tell a story of connection, and my wife's was a connection to Donald, not Deirdre." A more likely explanation might be that the revelation was shocking, hurtful; a stunning coda to thirty years of contented partnership. As Tannen would put it, Deirdre just doesn't understand.

Ruth Shalit, an account planner at Mad Dogs & Englishmen, writes an advertising column for *Salon*.

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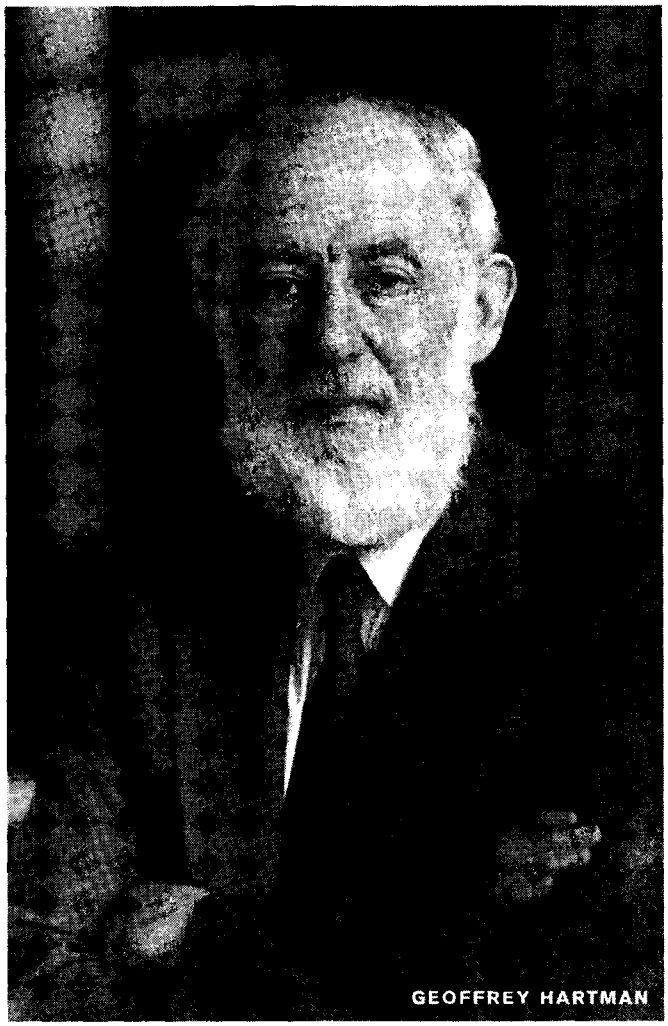
Perils of Poetry

BY STEPHEN BURT

I'M ON A COUPLE OF EMAIL lists frequented mostly by Web designers, journalists, rock critics, and historians—sharp people who read a lot and don't teach English. A few weeks ago, one person started to go on about undecidability in rock lyrics; another shot back (and here I have to paraphrase): "I haven't thought that way since I sold my Geoffrey Hartman books."

It was the most depressing sentence I read that week, not just because I admire Hartman but because it showed how widely he's misconstrued. Hartman was (with Harold Bloom, Paul de Man, and J. Hillis Miller) one of the Yale school of literary theorists, so-called by early 1980s pundits. Hartman is still best known for his Derrida-inflected work of those years and, more recently, for a series of Holocaust-related projects. (He directs a Yale archive of videotaped survivors' testimony.) Both associations make it more difficult to see his real value as a critic.

Read Hartman as a deconstructionist, and you will have obscured everything most rewarding in him; read him as a literary thinker, applying his constant concerns about words and emotions, meaning and value, to the Book of Genesis and Walter Benjamin, to Shakespeare and Freud and William Carlos Williams, and he becomes someone whose insights you'll want to remember. Collecting nineteen of Hartman's essays, *A Critic's Journey* finds room for almost all of his recurring themes. (A promised future volume will feature Hartman's essays "about subjects of Jewish interest.")



GEOFFREY HARTMAN

MICHAEL MARSLAND/YALE UNIVERSITY

Wallace Stevens famously wrote that poetry emerges from the imagination pressing back against the pressure of reality. Hartman insists—to oversimplify—that imaginative literature does not push reality out of the picture entirely but that it always runs the risk of doing so. For Hartman, the work of powerful writers risks replacing the actual world (with its other minds, material limits, and reciprocal obligations) with a wholly imagined, factitiously self-contained substitute. "Any call for purification or repristination is dangerous," he writes, especially when it might (and it always might) affect people's conduct. Reading a Yeats poem, for example, Hartman concludes that "part of the magic to be resisted is the poet's imperious assumption of a visionary mode, as if it were self-justifying." Whereas some historically minded critics deny literature's power to escape circumstance, Hartman readily believes in it. And he

A Critic's Journey: Literary Reflections, 1958–1998
By Geoffrey Hartman
Yale University Press
297 pp. • $35.00 • September

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likes that power best when it tempers itself. He admires writers who contain the supernatural, the imaginative, and the unconscious within the cognitive and the empirical, and who value self-consciousness over self-confidence.

He is thus a wonderful critic of writers who made self-conscious self-containments central to their own projects. His 1970 essay "Milton's Counterplot" shows how Milton's mixture of styles and genres in *Paradise Lost* places limits on the powers of Satan, reminding readers of God's "calm prescience," and keeping the story's supernatural or fantastic aspects under control. In another 1970 essay, Hartman extols Wordsworth's "poetic reflection," which "keeps nature within nature and resists supernatural fancies." That resistance to visionary movement, that chastened and calming return to a common world, is what Hartman admires so much in Wordsworth. Hartman does not feel he has to explain the appeal of imagination as such. Instead, he seeks in Wordsworth and others not their imaginative flights upward but their "binding" of imagination, their journeys back down. (The term, like the metaphor, Hartman takes from the biblical binding of Isaac.)

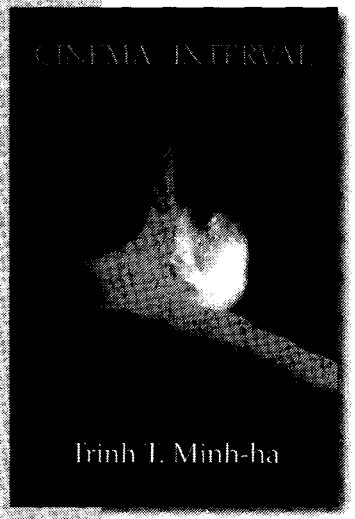
Hartman has written more often about Wordsworth than about anyone else, devoting two whole books and chapters of several more to the author of *Lyrical Ballads*. In these writings he describes the poet's attempts to reconnect himself to nature: to the rocks and stones and trees that Wordsworth used to touch to be sure he was real, and to the "balm deriving from common speech," whose euphemisms in Wordsworth's famous Lucy poems become a counterweight to grief.

Hartman writes now that his 1964 book, *Wordsworth's Poetry*, tracked the poet's dealings with "the imagination's independence from nature, and its temptation to seek a separate reality." Temptation here carries its full moral force. Imaginative works, for Hartman, should be admired and loved for their own powers but must be prevented from usurping power that is not theirs. Self-consciousness, recourse to philosophical traditions, and appeals to common usage and to history may help writers and readers avoid visionary arrogance, and Hartman discusses them all.

When Hartman writes in "Understanding Criticism" that "the critic is always a survivor, or someone who comes late," the pressures on that sentence are not only literary. The past he has in mind can include Shakespeare and Freud but also the murder of European Jews. Hartman outlines his life in a brief, new, and memorable "polemical memoir." To understand his interests, it certainly helps to know that he fled Nazi Germany for England at age nine, and then at sixteen set off for America, where he attended Queens College in New York City. He read there, he says, no "secondary literature," only poetry and novels. At Yale, he studied under the polymath, apparently omniglot inventors of comparative literature, older refugee scholars like Erich Auerbach and René Wellek.

Hartman's peripatetic career seems to inform even his most cerebral work; his

"An image is powerful



not necessarily because of anything specific it offers the viewer, but because of everything it apparently also takes away."—Trinh T. Minh-ha

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multilingual affiliations help him link French texts to German ideas, German ballads to English Romantic poetry, and Continental philosophy to all sorts of things. The same Continental sources inflect his prose. Contrasting belletristic Anglophile to theoretically ambitious Germanophile critics, the 1991 essay "Tea and Totality" concludes that the English tradition seeks "unself-consciousness or anti-self-consciousness," which, "however attractive...is surely a limitation rather than an expansion of the critical spirit." Anglophile critics wish to combine "power and charm," which Hartman "would like to keep separate."

Some readers may have little patience for Hartman's least charming, most self-conscious sentences, such as "It is hardly surprising that English studies should resist the influx of a French *discours* heavily indebted to post-Hegelian German philosophy." He can toss out neat aphorisms—"Interpretation is like a football game. You spot a hole and you go through"—but he rarely coins slogans or comes out swinging. Indeed, his style of thought, like his prose style, remains concessive, always alert to complexities, and, as he says, "deliberately hesitant." The words "yet," "but," and "nonetheless" attract him more than "therefore," "because," or "then."

Such circumspection strikes a pleasurable and trustworthy contrast to other critics' self-proclaimed rigor. The temptation to mastery can afflict a critic as well as a poet, and Hartman reminds us of this danger, calling for critics to "renounce the ambition to master or demystify." His concern to grant claims both for and against imagination, for and against rules, make him a judicious commentator on recent canon wars: Hartman writes that the the restoration of voice to silenced people, which he calls the "Pjilomela project," "has had a strange result. Retrieval of the past produced a conspicuous increase in feelings of guilt about culture as such."

The temptation to mastery can afflict a critic as well as a poet, and Hartman reminds us of this danger, calling for critics to "renounce the ambition to master or demystify."

The insight that made him a deconstructionist for a while is perhaps this: Something about the force of powerful literature seems unruly, not subject to conscious control by anyone, and this somehow accounts for our difficulty in deciding for sure what a literary text says or means. One line of critics has minimized literature's unruly power; another has celebrated it. Hartman wishes to restrain and respect it.

Stephen Burt is completing a dissertation on Randall Jarrell at Yale University. His collection of poems, *Popular Music*, has recently been published by the University of Colorado Press.

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High Society

BY ALISON DEMOS

Life and Death on Mt. Everest: Sherpas and Himalayan Mountaineering
By Sherry B. Ortner
Princeton University Press
376 pp. • $26.95 • October

GEORGE MALLORY'S famous quip on being asked why he wanted to climb Mount Everest—because it is there—is not simply evasive. The mountaineer, in silent contemplation of forbidding heights, would rather do it than talk about it. Nonetheless, the tight-lipped mountaineering spirit has yielded a steady and rich stream of travelogues and adventure stories, from Sir Edmund Hillary's 1955 account of the first successful Everest summit expedition, *High Adventure*, to John Krakauer's best-selling book about the tragic 1996 expedition, *Into Thin Air*. The thrill of these stories depends in part on the way that such thin air makes talking difficult; they wring meaning out of the mortal solitude of climber and peak. The voice of the mountaineer reaches us over a great distance, its authenticity sharpened by hardship, loneliness, and altitude.

Yet in the case of Himalayan mountaineering, there are key voices that have gone mostly unheard in the West—those of the Sherpas who have accompanied virtually every expedition since the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India first triangulated the highest mountain on Earth in 1852. Who knew, for example, that at least one Sherpa has reached the summit of Everest ten times? Now the Columbia University anthropologist Sherry Ortner has written a keen and compelling ethnography of the evolving relationship between Western mountain climbers and Sherpas throughout the twentieth century to right the balance.

Life and Death on Mt. Everest compiles thirty-odd years of Sherpa study, and Ortner works consistently against stereotypes to portray mountaineering Himalayans as neither noble tribesmen nor wage-bound coolies. She takes a long view of the history shared across the ethnic divide, framing the story as a cultural "encounter" that leaves neither party unchanged. In so doing, Ortner casts her lot with a strain of contemporary anthropological theory that urges attention to unfamiliar, non-Western "meanings" even as it acknowledges the power of Westerners to shape the terms on which those meanings develop.

On the Himalayan peaks, cultural influence and manipulation flow in both directions, though the "sahibs," or white mountaineering bosses, clearly have the upper hand in expeditions they fund and control. Throughout her book, Ortner uses the phrase "serious games" to describe the interactions of individuals aiming to control the course of change. For some time, the serious games of the sahibs have revolved around various forms of rebellion: Early in the century, they saw themselves forsaking the material greed of the age for spiritual experience on the mountain, whereas after World War II, the mountain offered them vital athleticism and eco-communion as opposed to a flabby, bureaucratic, and toxic modern order.

Ortner tracks these shifts in sensibility in order to plot them against changes in the Westerners' relations with Sherpas. An early twentieth-century white climber of a spiritualist bent might extol (however paternalistically) Sherpa loyalty and nobility on the slopes, while a postwar rebel-macho climber would be more likely to express a competitive anxiety about Sherpas' physical strength. Yet the spiritualist and the hard guy share an aversion to the materialism of mainstream Western culture: Stories of Sherpas risking (and not infrequently losing) their lives to stay by the side of dying sahibs proved to sahibs that Sherpas were not simply in it for the money.

Of course, the game looks different from the other end of the field. Ortner makes clear that money has indeed been central to the Sherpas' motivations, as low-status men discovered a fresh channel for ambition and wealth in the expedition business. Traditional Sherpa society offered relatively few means of becoming a "big" person if one started out "small," and the farming life tended to draw a sharp line between those who owned the land and those who worked it. There was also a chronic slide toward "smallness" as family land parcels were divided each time they passed to the next generation. In this context, mountaineering presented a way for a few Sherpas to get rich and for many more to make a better living than they could have in their home villages.

But a motive and a labor pool are merely starting points for the Sherpa story; how did Sherpas help define the mountaineering project once they signed on? Early Western recruiters

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looked mainly for porters, taking the mountaineering skills where they could find them. But for Sherpas, there was more at stake. In their villages, the absence of roads and (oddly) beasts of burden meant that everything, including the day's water supply, had to be carried from its source to each house. Accordingly, a distinguishing mark of high-status Sherpas in village life was that they did not carry their own loads. And when Sherpas entered the mountaineering business, they worked hard to distinguish undesirable portering duties (which they consigned to ethnic rivals) from increasingly skilled, high-altitude climbing support (which also paid better). Indeed, Sherpas improved their wages steadily over the century by staging strikes every now and again at key points during a climb.

But money was never just about money: Sherpas also seem to have waged a long and fairly successful campaign for what we could loosely call respect. Sahibs have consistently noted that there was nothing servile about the Sherpas' serving style (and service here includes everything from preparing and cleaning up meals to carrying a frostbitten climber back to camp). Sherpas performed whatever was asked of them with a kind of grace that spared them any indignity and the sahibs any pangs of guilt.

While sahibs may have been surprised by a Sherpa strike, the Sherpas' combination of friendly compliance and assertive self-interest was utterly consistent with the manners of their culture. Sherpas have long had a cultural model of unservile service: the *zhindak*. "A patron or protector who would help a lesser person to succeed," the figure of the *zhindak* appears in many Sherpa stories.

Significantly, the benevolent paternalism of the relationship between *zhindak* and protégé is based on an underlying belief in equality. As the dependent party succeeds in life, his relationship with the *zhindak* is expected to change accordingly; it's as if the *zhindak*'s support enables future equality. Ortner writes, "this is part of a larger cultural and religious pattern of both accepting and overcoming hierarchy," and she argues that when Sherpas served sahibs with grace and loyalty, they expected *zhindak*-like acknowledgments of their worth and companionship in return. Thus were climbing protocols negotiated and renegotiated on the snow at the border between sahib paternalism and Sherpa care-and-be-cared-for egalitarianism. Eventually Sherpas gained the right to choose which summit parties they would join, and they seem to have established an ethic in the higher-altitude camps: The burden of carrying expedition gear would be shared by Sherpa and sahib alike.

The *zhindak* story is the clearest point of exchange between Sherpa and sahib cultural meanings. Western paternalism met Himalayan paternalism and found itself outpaced. By contrast, Ortner's account of the development of Sherpa monasteries, which took place during roughly the same period as the growth in Himalayan mountaineering, feels dutiful. Clearly it serves as a reminder that Sherpas maintain their own culture beyond the world of the high-altitude climbing business, but it has little connection to the "encounter" at the heart of the book.

There is a peculiar irony, finally, in the choice of "encounter" as Ortner's guiding framework; namely, she seems not to have experienced mountaineering firsthand. As a result, her story unfolds at several removes from the Sherpa-sahib encounter. For the historical sections of the book, she necessarily relies on the written accounts of Westerners, but even as the narrative moves into the present, meanings and conventions embedded in mountaineering are gleaned from published interviews and other secondary sources. This is not to suggest that Ortner should have risked life and limb in ascending to Camp 4, but one wonders what else she might have learned had she cast her marvelous ethnographic eye on, say, the trek to base camp.

Nonetheless, the book brings us a much richer understanding of the cultural partnership underpinning Himalayan mountaineering than do the ripping yarns of Western adventurers. The voice of the iconic, solitary Western climber may have lost a bit of its authenticity in the process (solitary, my boot!), but high-altitude cross-cultural companionship carries its own kind of narrative adrenaline, and *Life and Death on Mt. Everest* is a swift and canny guide to this uncharted territory.

HIMALAYAN SHERPA

Eventually, Sherpas established that the burden of carrying expedition gear would be shared by tribesman and traveler alike.

Alison Demos, a cultural anthropologist, is managing director of research at KRC Research & Consulting in New York City.

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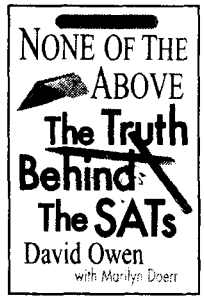

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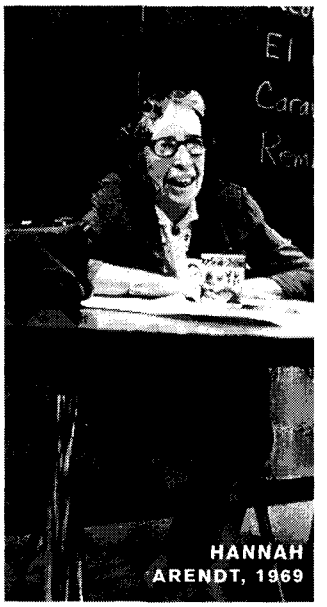
Thinking Out Loud

BY JOHN PLOTZ

HANNAH ARENDT, BORN in 1906 in Immanuel Kant's Königsberg and educated in Martin Heidegger's Freiburg, fled the Nazis and became the Upper West Side's resident political theorist. From 1941 until her death in 1976, she remained as passionately devoted to the United States' political promise as she was critical of its failings. Arendt was no parochialist, as her investigations into subjects ranging from Adolf Eichmann to Greek philosophy attest, but her American setting matters deeply in assessing her work. One of her writing's great strengths is that her most universalizing claims always spring from an initial, well-known particular. At age four, she protested a parent's departure not with a cry but with a categorical law: "A child should not be separated from its mother." Whether in the abstruse *Life of the Mind,* which stops to consider whether bodily organs are necessarily ugly (her conclusion: only the outsides of our bodies can ever be beautiful), or in her 1971 analysis of the Pentagon Papers, "Lying in Politics," Arendt's *amor mundi* is everywhere revealed by her unblinking attention to the world's present vagaries and peculiar byways.

Much of Arendt's best work demonstrates her high regard for the American revolutionaries' commitment to solidarity among equals; her short treatise *On Revolution* favorably contrasts their commitment to considered public debate with the antipoverty fervor and the Rousseauistic belief in "popular will" that justified the French Revolution. At the same time, Arendt often expressed her fear of this country's particular kind of "social slavery": not only the homogenizing effects of consumer culture but the detestable practice of going public with the emotions that she maintained (drawing on a largely imaginary ideal of ancient Athens) were better off expressed only in the privacy of familial life. Her credo was: sol-



HANNAH ARENDT, 1969

idarity always, pity never.

As left-wing and liberal theorists cast about for ways to further the causes of social justice and participatory democracy, Arendt's fascinating, often archaic-sounding critique of both liberalism and socialism has sparked important work by thinkers such as George Kateb, Richard Bernstein, Seyla Benhabib, and Bonnie Honig. Like Dana Villa's earlier book, *Arendt and Heidegger* (Princeton, 1996), the loosely linked essays in *Politics, Philosophy, Terror* help place Arendt in relation to her philosophical antecedents; more importantly, they also raise the question of her political theory's contemporary relevance.

Arendt's defining intellectual passion, most fully expounded in her masterwork, *The Human Condition* (1958), was an avowed preference for the *vita activa,* or active life, over the *vita contemplativa,* or contemplative life. The Western intellectual tradition's preference for "motionless contemplation of the eternal" over "performance of great deeds in the public realm" (in Villa's formulation) seemed to Arendt a great mistake. Western philosophers, Arendt believed, too often failed to consider that even the most rarefied thoughts are inevitably transformed into public deeds at the moment of their expression.

And yet, Arendt's praise of the active life was not indiscriminate. Fearing the sort of pseudo-democracy that celebrates the freedom to make trivial choices and reap material rewards, Arendt drew a strict distinction between properly political acts, which she championed, and the merely social "behavior" involved in commercial or domestic life. To Arendt, action is political only under certain circumstances: when it takes place in a suitably public arena, when it acknowledges the importance of every opinion that is expressed, and when it refuses the pursuit of merely material ends—all criteria that can be found in the work of that other German friendly foe of liberalism, Jürgen Habermas.

Is this an impossibly narrow definition of politics? Yes.

Politics, Philosophy, Terror: Essays on the Thought of Hannah Arendt
By Dana R. Villa
Princeton University Press
266 pp. • $17.95 • October

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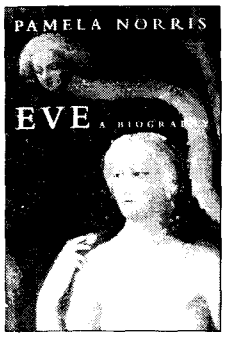

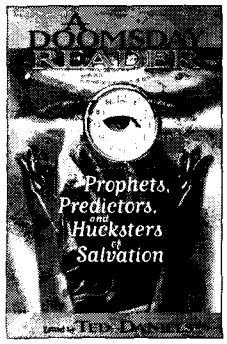

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Indeed, arguing and bragging sometimes seem the only actions to fit the bill. But Arendt nonetheless offers a real insight into every individual's necessary reliance on the actions of others: She memorably insisted that one can neither forgive nor make a promise to oneself. Arendt maintained that individuality is not some sort of indwelling, hidden quality (she despised the "jargon of authenticity" as much as her fellow exile Theodor Adorno). Rather, she believed that individuality comes into being only in the differentiating give-and-take of public performance and communication.

Believing that only political action honors the individual's capacity to bring something new into the world, Arendt called for perpetual vigilance on the part of citizens and expressed deep disdain for private life and its emotional vagaries. However, much of the best recent work on Arendt, such as Hanna Pitkin's *The Attack of the Blob: Hannah Arendt and the Rise of the Social* (Chicago, 1998), takes issue with her claim to distinguish political activity and social passivity so conclusively. Pitkin's noteworthy accomplishment is to align herself with Arendt's incisive criticisms of an expert-staffed and wealth-driven political realm while refusing her unsound notion that all nonpolitical undertakings are mere behavoir, not freely chosen action.

Pitkin's work is subtle and compelling, but it does not directly address another one of Arendt's weaknesses: the rather stark contrast she made between the active and the contemplative life. Villa correctly discerns that her dislike of contemplation poses problems for a liberal polity largely willing to tolerate, indeed to lionize, private meditation performed for no good but one's own. At the same time, he recognizes that Arendt abhorred the totalitarian demand for acts of blind obedience. In the best of the essays in *Politics, Philosophy, Terror*, then (most notably "Thinking and Judging" and "Arendt and Socrates"), Villa explores the tensions between

CORBIS-BETTMANN

Arendt's disdain for those who fail to think and her distrust of the contemplative retreat from the world.

It is not, after all, as if Arendt hated thought in all its forms. Villa reminds us that she famously charged Eichmann with "thoughtlessness": He abetted and committed genocide because he failed to pause at each moment to think about what he was doing. Villa's point is that the only satisfying alternative to such mindlessness may well lie in the realm of contemplation. That is, Eichmann's evil lay in his lacking "individual reflection or the prohibitions of conscience." Such alone are the assets of contemplation, Villa believes.

Trained as we have been in the abiding autonomy of the individual mind, we may be tempted to agree. But on this key point—the possibility of engaging in meaningful thought without withdrawing into contemplation—Villa downplays the power of Arendt's account. Instead of relying on solitary contemplation to save us from error, Arendt proposed an act of the imagination that she called "representative thinking." In her 1967 essay "Truth and Politics," Arendt puts it this way: "I form an opinion by considering a given issue from different viewpoints, by making present to my mind the standpoints of those who are absent; that is, I represent them. This is a question neither of empathy, as though I tried to be or feel like somebody else, nor of counting noses and joining a majority. The more people's standpoints I have present in my mind while I am pondering a given issue, and the better I can imagine how I would feel and think if I were in their place, the stronger will be my capacity for representative thinking and the more valid my final conclusions, my opinion."

> Arendt conceives imagination as the last best hope against thoughtlessness.

For Arendt, one can only complete one's own view of the world by conjecturing the views of others. She draws here on Kant's aesthetics, which find in the imagination a form of knowledge unavailable elsewhere. But her insight is quintessentially modern: Without a shared faith in a universal "moral sentiment," the possibility of "representing" others' thoughts by way of the imagination is the high road to knowing and judging.

One might have reason to believe contemplation can arrive at moral certainties where Arendt's representative thinking cannot. But her idea of grasping at the world through grasping at others' minds is nonetheless a compelling description of what aesthetic thinking, that is, the imagination, can offer politics. Arendt acknowledges that we live in a world where each individual must make moral judgments "without banisters," where the guarantees of a unified community do not exist. And yet she insists that when we fail to conceive of others' viewpoints, we fail to make our thought fully compatible with the realm of action. Like the Victorian novelists whose belief in domestic bliss she so deeply distrusted, Arendt conceives imagination as the last best hope against thoughtlessness.

Villa, in ending his lucid and illuminating book, is absolutely right to criticize Arendt for remaining "blind to the possibility that care for the world may take a variety of forms," not just political ones, just as Pitkin is right to fault her for imagining that all activity that is not political is a kind of programmed automatism. Yet Arendt's defense of the role of the imagination in safeguarding and improving political life remains significant: It suggests that the otherworldly injunction to "love thy neighbor as thyself" should be replaced with the this-worldly "know thy neighbor as thyself." The possibility of following that injunction is made conceivable by Arendt's dogged insistence that we come to know others via the same avenues we come to know ourselves: by acting in public, speaking in public, and imagining others with their place in public firmly in mind.

John Plotz teaches English at Johns Hopkins University. His book *The Crowd: British Literature and Public Politics* will be published by the University of California Press next fall.

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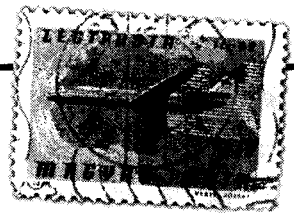
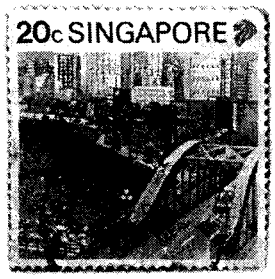


tury American West (Kansas, 1998) revisits the territory covered by Earl Pomeroy's 1957 classic, *In Search of the Golden West*. Rothman offers an updated, comprehensive history of the development of tourism in the region, from the Santa Fe Railway's exploitation of the Grand Canyon and its resident Native American tribes to dude ranching, skiing, gambling, 'ecotourism,' and other activities."



James Clifford, professor of the history of consciousness at the University of California at Santa Cruz and author of *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late 20th Century* (Harvard, 1997).

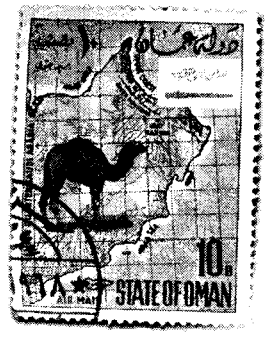
"It has always been hard to take tourists seriously. By definition, they are superficial, herdlike, and ugly. But **Jean-Didier Urbain's** ***L'idiot du voyage*** (Plon, 1991) skewers anti-tourist discourses with wit and erudition, reconnecting tourism to its alter ego, sophisticated 'travel.' Similarly, **Ruth Phillips's** finely argued and documented ***Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art From the Northeast, 1700–1900*** (Washington, 1998) dissolves the modern category of 'tourist art,' tracing the souvenir trade in the Great Lakes region over several centuries. And she provides something still rare in the literature: a developed account of Native American interests—cultural, political, and aesthetic—in the exchange. **Orvar Löfgren's** ***On Holiday: A History of Vacationing*** (California, 1999) offers acute, whimsical, self-reflexive histories of sight-seeing, walking, driving, cottage life, landscapes, postcards, getaways, nostalgias, and especially the quest of sun-starved northern Europeans for the South."

Dean MacCannell, professor of landscape architecture at the University of California at Davis and author of *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (California, 1999).

"Sight-seeing at famous natural, cultural, or historical attractions, once decried as 'pseudo,' now seems quaintly authentic when compared with a visit to the Mall of America, Disney World, or Las Vegas. Meticulously researched and highly readable, **Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's** ***Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*** (California, 1998) describes how classic tourist destinations like the Louvre, the Grand Canyon, and the Acropolis now emulate theme parks and megamalls, while museums play kitsch-up with commercial attractions, leaving nothing to the tourist's imagination. In ***On the Beaten Track: Tourism, Art, and Place*** (New Press, 1999), **Lucy Lippard** turns her curatorial attention to a wide array of tourist attractions, from rural New England and Santa Fe to local 'popular collections' and the sites of tragedies. She shows how artists incorporate these places into their art, suggesting that artists and tourists can reclaim sight-seeing from the commercial entertainment industry."

John Hannigan, professor of sociology at the University of Toronto and author of *Fantasy City: Pleasure and Profit in the Postmodern Metropolis* (Routledge, 1998).

"***Spectacular Nature: Corporate Culture and the Sea World Experience*** (California, 1997), **Susan Davis's** multilayered and very readable



ethnography of San Diego's most-visited destination, seamlessly fuses political economy and cultural analysis. The 'Sea World experience,' she demonstrates, is designed to exploit middle-class fantasies about nature tourism as a form of self-improvement and as a source of cultural capital. Another top-notch case study with a social-constructionist outlook is **Rosalie Schwartz's** ***Pleasure Island: Tourism and Temptation in Cuba*** (Nebraska, 1997). In the 1920s, and again in the 1950s, entrepreneurial but corrupt political elites on the island, in economic partnership with American businessmen, built an infrastructure of hotels, country clubs, racetracks, casinos, and nightclubs, sheathing them in a contrived wrapper of Afro-Cuban exoticism. With a third cycle of Cuban tourism now picking up speed, Schwartz's sparkling and evocative historical narrative is especially timely and instructive."

Patrick Holland, professor of English at the University of Guelph and co-author with Graham Huggan of *Tourists With Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (Michigan, 1998).

"***Black Sea,*** by **Neal Ascherson** (Hill & Wang, 1996), and ***A Book of Migrations: Some Passages in Ireland,*** by **Rebecca Solnit** (Verso, 1997), are both accounts by sensitive and well-informed travelers who demonstrate richly nuanced engagement with the regions they address. Too often, travel writers treat identity and ethnicity as simple, transparent concepts. Ascherson and Solnit avoid this trap, complicating the already layered histories of the Black Sea region and Ireland with explorations of ethnicity, migration, and nomadism. Not only do these two books provide eloquent accounts of their authors' chosen terrains, but they also make for refreshing detours from the often clichéd highway of the travelogue."

JOHN PALATTELLA

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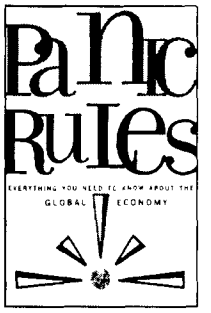

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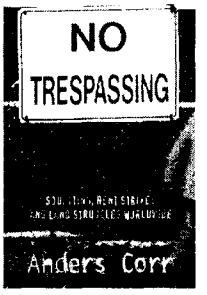

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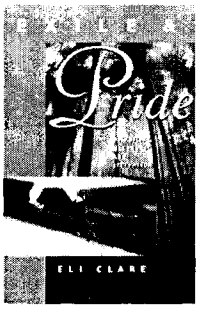

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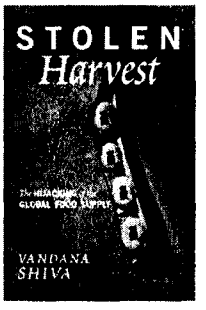

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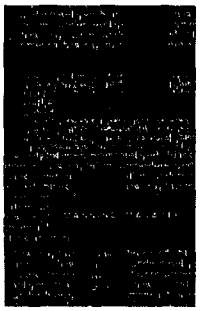

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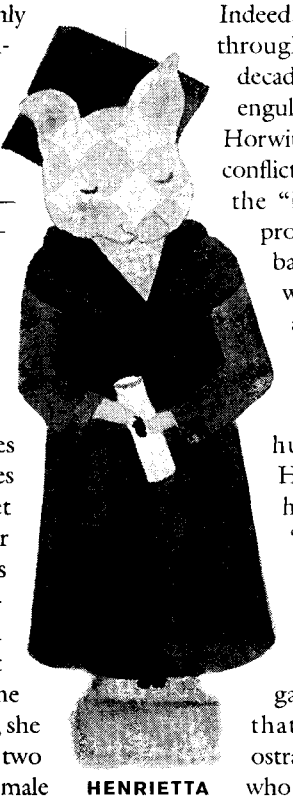
PIG TALES

THE PIG HAS ALWAYS GOTTEN A BAD RAP IN the annals of political liberation movements. Hollywood's Babe and E.B. White's Wilbur may be cuddly icons, but swine have more often been identified with the police, with misogynists, with the irrational forces of capitalist appetite. Is this fair? In his third children's book, the macho, expletive-loving David Mamet addresses the problem of anti-pig chauvinism in the halls of justice itself. *Henrietta* (Houghton Mifflin), published this November, is the brief tale of a bookish, bespectacled pig who aspires to the Law. And so, "having seen the barriers to the Professions crumble before now this and now that disadvantaged group, she presented herself at the institution of her choice"—clearly identifiable in Elizabethe Dahlie's charming watercolor illustrations as Harvard.

Ignored by the indifferent monolith, Henrietta haunts the libraries and lecture halls, only to be kicked out as a nuisance and eventually reduced to sleeping under a Charles River bridge. Just as she begins to despair, she meets a scruffy, bearded vagabond fumbling for his glasses on a park bench. She escorts the old man—who, naturally, turns out to be the president of the university—home, where they sit by the fire trading lines from Sophocles and Fielding as she waits for "the effect her identity might have on him." When he puts on his glasses and discovers that his companion is a pig, he is unmoved. But after she gives a burning speech, which she later uses as her commencement address—"Let us not be sentimental," she tells her fellow J.D.'s, "over the accomplishments of one who comes from a disadvantaged group, but let us work for social justice"—she wins herself a place at Harvard and eventually on the Supreme Court. To judge from the illustrations, she adjudicates happily ever after alongside two women, one African American, and five male justices of an indeterminate peachy hue.



ELIZABETH DAHLIE

HENRIETTA

Is *Henrietta* an anti–affirmative action fable? A gloss on *Hopwood* v. *Texas* for the under-five crowd? An ironic retort to the P.C. sentimentality some see afflicting children's literature in this era of the Rainbow Curriculum? Alan Dershowitz, blurbing the book, has declared Henrietta kosher. But will the average American rug rat be delighted and instructed by this *Hamlet*-quoting pig in the city?

Obscure as Mamet's porcine parable may seem, these days he's not the only writer to find burning social issues among swine. In *Hog Ties: Pigs, Manure, and Mortality in American Culture* (St. Martin's, 1998), Richard Horwitz, a professor of American studies at the University of Iowa, goes foraging through packing plants, agriculture schools, USDA offices, tchotchke shops, and anti-environmentalists' rallies in search of the deeper meaning of pork. Horwitz's pursuit of the pig takes him from literary studies—a chapter called "Multicultural Porcinalia" analyzes Ellis Parker Butler's anti-prejudice 1905 story "Pigs Is Pigs"—to veterinary science and the byzantine politics of the barnyard.

Indeed, just as the culture wars have swept through American campuses in the last decade, the swinological world has been engulfed by the equally vicious hog wars. Horwitz takes an evenhanded look at the conflicts between small family farmers and the "big guys," the 10 percent who produce 90 percent of our ham and bacon. He's slightly less evenhanded when discussing the animal-rights activists who, in his view, fail to appreciate the lessons in mortality that the slaughterhouse provides. When it comes to assessing both human job loss and pig death, Horwitz likes to fall back on what he calls "the colloquial alternative"—"shit happens." And the shit that happens to pigs, he notes, often ends up looking a lot like our own social problems. Horwitz devotes considerable space to transmissible gastroenteritis, a nasty porcine plague that can lead to the subtle social ostracism of afflicted farmers by others who fear contagion. Even the war on

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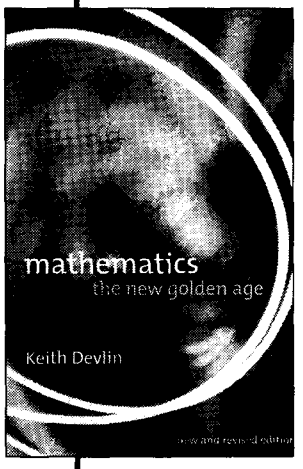

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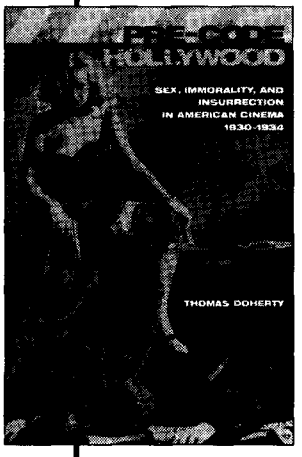

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drugs has evolved a swinish equivalent: Until recently, the USDA has adopted a policy of "zero tolerance" toward the residues of growth promotants and pesticides in pork.

Horwitz, who moonlighted at a local hog farm for twenty years, believes that spending time near the farrowing houses and manure "lagoons" of a family hog operation can provide relief from the intrigues of a huge, diversified, vertically integrated university campus. But he is not simply presenting a paean to agrarian virtue. After a hilarious account of an anthropologist rival who derailed one of his research projects, Horwitz concludes, in his best Midwestern Taoist "shit happens" mode, that "mixing academics with hog shit will probably produce offensive material, regardless." And while Horwitz is no fan of agribusiness, he also sees the darker side of nostalgia for family farms. "After all," he writes, "if locals really had their way, most of the people who plant cotton and rice in the United States would still be slaves, and my immigrant ancestors would likely still be living (or, even more likely, slaughtered) 'back where they belong.'"

It's an argument about local control versus federalism that could have come straight from a Harvard J.D.'s snout.

JENNIFER SCHUESSLER

METAPHYSICIAN, MAP THYSELF

IN THE MID-1960S, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY'S Robert Horn attempted to abolish the paragraph. "The question at hand was how to make learning easier and quicker," he explains, "specifically in the areas of technical, business, and science writing, where the point is to get information across." The outstanding problem, he felt, was that the fundamental unit of writing was flawed for this purpose: "The paragraph didn't have a well-agreed-upon taxonomy; it meant different things to different people." While one cognitive scientist might dash off a paragraph of Raymond Carver–like brevity, another might pen a sprawling, Proustian passage to make the same point. The paragraph was simply too relaxed a category and thus a source of unnecessary confusion and a sign of poor organization.

Horn, a pioneer of information theory and now a visiting scholar at Stanford University, wanted to develop a system that would replace traditional paragraphs with standardized information blocks. He began sorting thousands of sample sentences into various categories, determining how much and what sort of information each sentence contained: Some sentences made claims, others offered evidence, others defined terms, and still others were purely rhetorical. Eventually, with the help of government funding, his method blossomed into Information Mapping, Inc., an international consulting firm that continues to teach information organization to professionals worldwide, offering hundreds of classes a year.

Despite his successes as a CEO and author (he influenced today's Web designers and information architects with his 1989 book, *Mapping Hypertext*), Horn had his eye on bigger targets than simple paragraphs: He wanted to extend his approach to whole intellectual debates. After all, if you can bundle and organize the information in paragraphs to convey the gist of a larger argument, why can't you do the same with the arguments themselves, in order to explain the bare essentials of an entire debate?

The result of Horn's efforts is the ambitious, interdisciplinary, and altogether singular Mapping Great Debates series. The project's first installment, *Can Computers Think?* (MacroVU Press, 1998), arrives in the form of seven maps, each measuring three feet high by four feet wide. Altogether, the set maps more than eight hundred arguments drawn from 380 authors. Each map addresses one aspect of the series' title question.

All the maps take as their starting point Alan Turing's seminal 1950 article in *Mind*, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence," in which he argued that computers can perform formal operations that closely resemble certain kinds of thinking. The next step for Horn and his team of researchers was to summarize and situate all the major arguments that bear on Turing's claim, connecting these arguments with flowchart arrows to signal whether they support or dispute one another. The individual arguments appear in bite-size form—typically in four or five declarative sentences, often accompanied by a humorous illustration—and feature the same "careful and precise modularity" that Horn imposed on his earlier info paragraphs.

For instance, on map 6, "Do Computers Have to Be Conscious to Think?" one finds eight connected "issue areas," each focusing on a subquestion. Once you have entered a given area—for example, that of the subquestion "Is the consciousness requirement solipsistic?"—you'll find that Turing's central claim is disputed, in this case by Geoffrey Jefferson's 1949 argument that mechanisms can't possess human consciousness, which

Horn's maps locate some eight hundred arguments drawn from 380 philosophers.

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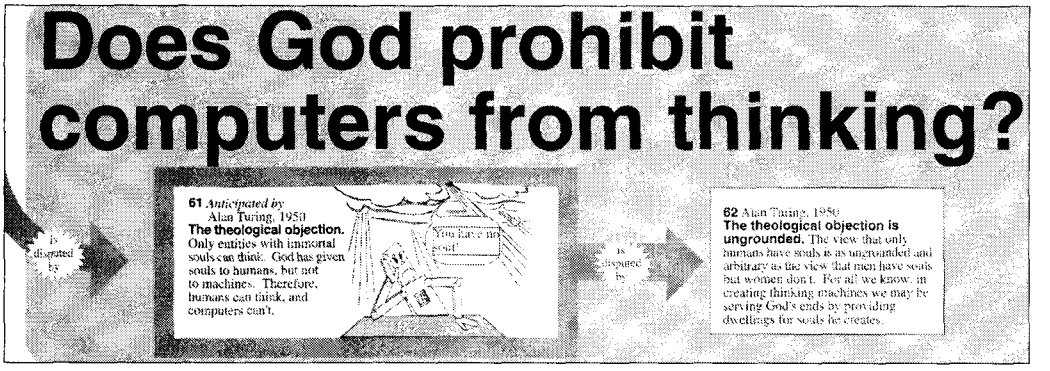
Does God prohibit computers from thinking?
61 Anticipated by Alan Turing, 1950
The theological objection.
Only entities with immortal souls can think. God has given souls to humans, but not to machines. Therefore, humans can think, and computers can't.
You have no soul!
is disputed by
is disputed by
62 Alan Turing, 1950
The theological objection is ungrounded. The view that only humans have souls is as ungrounded and arbitrary as the view that men have souls but women don't. For all we know, in creating thinking machines we may be serving God's ends by providing dwellings for souls he creates.

Collins worries that the maps will be used as a philosophical Cliffs Notes.

is in turn disputed by Turing's 1950 argument that solipsism is not pragmatic, which is in turn supported by John Stuart Mill's 1878 argument from analogy, which is in turn disputed by Sidney Hook's 1960 argument against the argument from analogy. Surveying all eighty-four square feet of the maps' furious philosophical back-and-forth is a little like sitting in the nosebleed seats for an immense round-robin tennis tournament.

Horn considers the Mapping Great Debates series part of the emerging field of argumentation analysis, an area of study introduced by philosopher Stephen Toulmin in his 1958 book, *The Uses of Argument*. Toulmin, a former student of Ludwig Wittgenstein's, believed philosophers were mistaken in their hope that knowledge and argumentation could be formalized in the manner of Euclidean geometry. Rather, Toulmin stressed that the reasoning we use in everyday life works by example and counterexample, by questioning the grounds of a claim and offering rebuttals, by referring to other arguments and modifying claims. If only philosophers could make this sort of real-world procedure explicit, Toulmin hoped, they "would then be free to discuss epistemological issues without being distracted by the puzzles arising from the Cartesian ideal of 'geometrical' knowledge." That is, the question "Can computers think?" will be answered not by appealing to formal logical rules but, as Toulmin notes with approval

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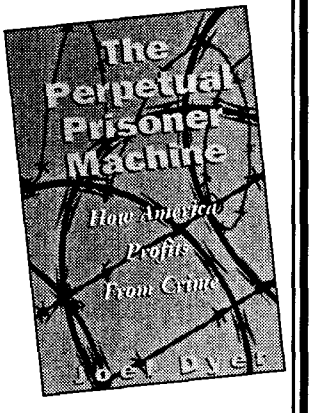

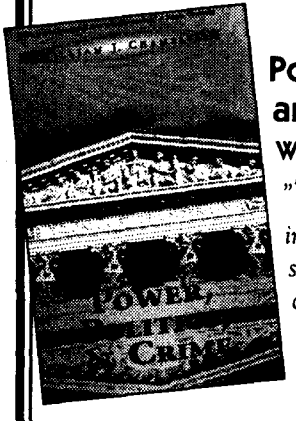

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of Horn's maps, by "setting out and appraising the networks of claims."

Others have been more skeptical of Horn's accomplishments. In his otherwise positive review of the maps in *Nature,* Professor Harry Collins of the Centre for the Study of Knowledge Expertise and Science at Cardiff University points out that Horn's charts can be misleading. Collins feels that Horn overemphasizes subdebates without properly acknowledging the existence of broader philosophical positions. For example, the philosopher Hubert Dreyfus, a major figure among those who have argued against the possibility of artificial intelligence, is represented only "by discrete elements of his argument." Further, Collins worries that the maps will be used as a philosophical Cliffs Notes: They will be displayed on university bulletin boards, he fears, and "those who do not want to read more deeply will use them as a 'crib.'"

Collins's critique hints at deeper institutional anxieties. After all, maps threaten some of the professoriate's most valued commodities: the mandate to provide relevant context for assigned readings, the prerogative to define the teams that wage academic disputes, and the option of couching ideas in forbidding jargon. Horn, on the other hand, notes that his maps cut back the "underbrush of sometimes overwritten academic prose," and "provide a way that students can come to understand positions for themselves by examining how different camps come to different points."

Not all professors cringe at the thought of a visual language that intrudes on the written text. Peter Suber, a philosopher at Earlham College, has already used Horn's maps to supplement his course on the philosophy of artificial intelligence and has nominated them for an award given jointly by the American Philosophical Association and the Philosophy Documentation Center for curricular innovation in philosophy. Suber concedes that "the idea of mapping philosophical debates may be as old as doodles in student notebooks with arrows connecting one claim to another. But I've never seen one in print, let alone a systematic attempt to map all the significant positions in a significant branch of philosophy."

Horn, meanwhile, is looking over the horizon again, to a world beyond text. As he embarks on further sets of maps—he hopes to devote a set to evolutionary theory and another to a public-policy debate—he dreams of "databases of argumentation," in which modular, summarized arguments can be dialed up and quickly mapped to fit a scholar's specific needs: "We're scrambling toward an efficient visual language, and the maps get across much of what the academic community has hitherto largely communicated using text alone."

JAMES RYERSON

THE WALSER SONATA

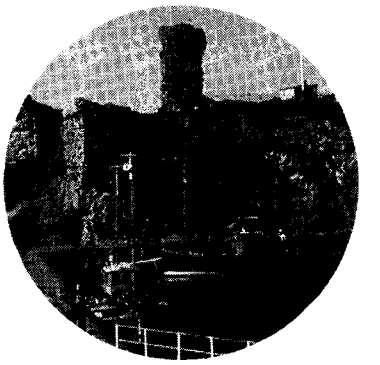
REPULSED BY GRANDIOSITY, THE SWISS WRITER Robert Walser was a miniaturist who opened up every detail of his wanderings, physical and mental, to his own peculiar type of whimsical scrutiny. Walser's great novel, the semiautobiographical *Jakob von Gunten,* freshly released thirty years after its original appearance in English in the lovely new series put out by *The New York Review of Books,* is only 176 pages long. It is written in the form of a journal, Jakob's, and tells the story of his matriculation at the Benjamenta Institute, a school for servants.

"One can't help feeling how hopelessly lost in the world modesty is," Jakob tells us. He could be passing judgment on his creator, who made a special literary form out of modesty. Born in 1878 in Biel, Switzerland, Walser left school at fourteen. He worked at a bank, failed at becoming an actor, and gradually found his way through poetry to a unique style of prose—the most characteristic feature of which is a delighted embrace of "something slightly nice in everything," as Jakob puts it. Like Walser, Jakob is a kind of anti-Teuton: "The mumbling of a grumbler is lovelier to me than the murmuring of a woodland stream," he confides to his journal. "People, people, nothing but people! Yes, I feel it most strongly: I love people."

While living in Berlin, Walser published three novels before 1910, *The Tanner Siblings, The Assistant,* and *Jakob von Gunten.* Franz Kafka gave the last to his friend Max Brod as a birthday present. Walser, meanwhile, distinguished himself in Berlin society by asking the playwright Hugo von Hofmannsthal at a party, "Couldn't you forget for a bit that you're famous?"

Walser continued to write after 1910 but met with less success and moved back to Switzerland. By the end of the decade, perhaps fueled by wartime pressure to economize but more likely by his characteristic self-effacement, Walser began to write his drafts in a tiny script that looks, on the page, like bird tracks. He wrote on the backs of receipts, on postcards that had already been scribbled on, and, sweetly, on rejection slips. The letters in his microscript are only one or at most two millimeters high.

At first, Walser made regular-size copies of the miniature originals; as he lost his audience, he



WILLIAM BIGGER/ARCHIVE

Before publishing three novels, Walser worked as a butler at Dambrau Castle.

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By the late 1910s, Walser began to write his drafts in a tiny script that looks, on the page, like bird tracks.

gradually stopped bothering. As a result, it has required decades of scholarly work, first in the 1970s and then again recently, to ready his microscripts for publication. And if his microscripts courted silence, Walser crept not far behind. In 1929 he was persuaded to check himself into a mental hospital, where he was diagnosed (incorrectly) with schizophrenia. In 1933 he was moved, against his will, to a sanatorium near the snowy Swiss town of Herisau, where he died in 1956.

Walser's Herisau years were traditionally thought of as proseless. "I am not here to write," he reportedly told his friend and guardian, Carl Seelig, "but to be mad." But in a recent issue of the Robert Walser Society newsletter, Catherine Sauvat, Walser's French biographer, reports that she has found an attendant who cared for Walser during the 1940s and 1950s who says that he wrote every day. None of this work appears to exist any longer.

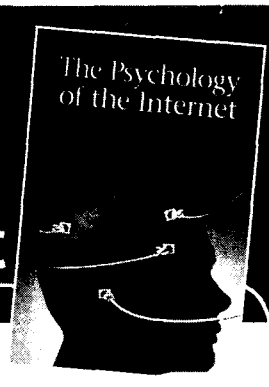
Walser's collected writings have grown rapidly nonetheless. Walser's complete works now fill twenty volumes, which is extraordinary considering that many of his fully realized pieces are not quite five hundred words. Embedded in his jottings is a fourth novel, *The Robber,* which the University of Nebraska Press will publish next year. According to Susan Bernofsky, its translator, the book is a "weird love story, full of delays. These are the first two lines: 'Edith loves him. More on this later.'"

In *Jakob von Gunten,* Walser is similarly abrupt in his methods. Christopher Middleton's translation mimics Walser's jerky takeoffs—Jakob is a teenager, after all—with the same grace that it brings to the hummingbirdlike hoverings of Walser's more meditative moods. The novel is, at least in one crucial respect, autobiographical: Walser was a butler in Dambrau Castle in Upper Silesia during the winter of 1905; this was the vocational fruit of his own brief education at a school for servants in Berlin. But the novel's developing drama is imagined: It concerns Jakob's deepening involvement with the brother and sister who direct the school, the mercurial Herr and the Venus-like Fräulein Benjamenta. At first, they are as forbidding as the Alps; before long, however, Jakob is exploring their "inner chambers," only to find that they "don't look chamber-like at all."

As the novel progresses, the Benjamenta Institute begins to dissolve alongside Jakob's dreams of perfect servitude. The other pupils find placements or just disappear. There are no new

The Psychology of the Internet

Patricia Wallace



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students. And Jakob, who wanted to become "a charming, utterly spherical zero," is subject to the ever closer attentions of the Benjamentas. When he was simply a servant in training, he could imagine his own historical, spiritual, and sexual fantasies. Now he is subject to the fantasies of others and to the pull of their emotional desires. "It's a delightful prickly feeling to behave with you in a rather weak sort of way, and more softly than usual," Herr Benjamenta tells Jakob, and soon afterward tries to strangle him. Fräulein Benjamenta calmly tells Jakob that she is dying and then chides him: "You listen to my miserable tale as if it were something small, fine, and ordinary...."

When Fräulein Benjamenta dies, Walser cuts an emotional clearing by lacerating the literary conventions that attend death. "None of us said anything," Jakob writes, "and we weren't 'plunged in thought.'" In sharing their mourning overnight, Herr Benjamenta and Jakob draw closer. They are soon plotting an escape, not just from the collapsing institute but from Western culture. Jakob's naive dream of living with Herr Benjamenta in an Arab or an Indian culture where they will ride animals around peacefully is heartbreaking. "God goes with thoughtless people," Jakob concludes.

Walser identifies with the underdog in place of the *übermensch* ("After Nietzsche," Max Brod said, "Walser had to come"). But as he does so, he also inhabits the role of the underling who is happy serving the overlord. "I like running downstairs," Jakob says. Walser felt with perfect sincerity, even as he was joking, that to find happiness we must be "positively drowning in obedience." It was not Don Quixote but Sancho Panza, that wine- and cheese-adoring servant, who played Walser's preferred part. Just before he accepts Herr Benjamenta's proposal to travel together in the desert, Jakob dreams, lucidly, that "I was always the Squire and the Principal was the Knight."

Walser celebrates a submissiveness which is at the same time an assertion of his meticulous creativity—"Tears of loyalty and dependence, how beautiful that is!" His imaginative capitulation to life and to language lies at the source of his identity; unlike Bartleby the Scrivener, his servants, his narrators, and his characters would prefer *to*. If this makes his prose especially complicated—"Walser wreathes himself Bacchus-like with garlands of language which keep tripping him up," Walter Benjamin said—it is because he made it all up out of half steps. Walser's dance was the tangle.

AARON RETICA

While living in a Swiss sanatorium, Walser reportedly told a friend, "I'm not here to write but to be mad."

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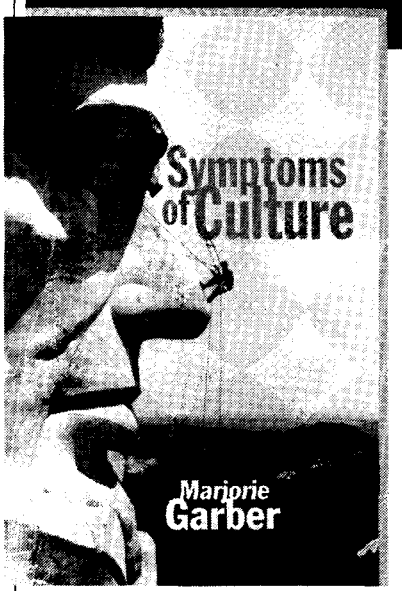

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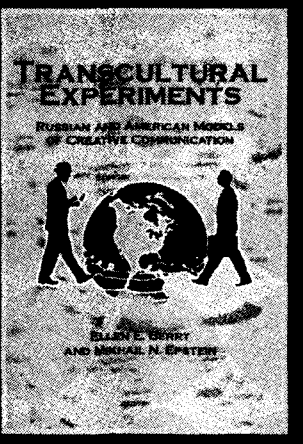

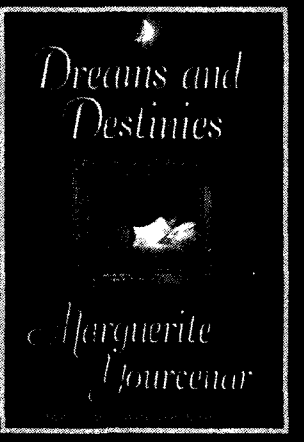

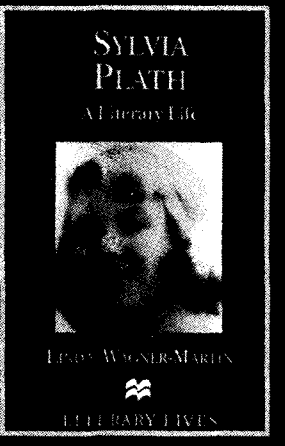

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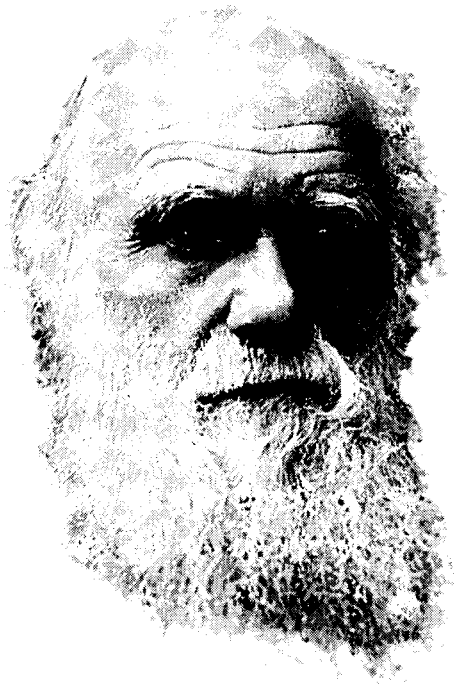

OH MY

WHO'S THE FITTEST EVOLUTIONARY THINKER OF THEM ALL?

BY **JAMES SCHWARTZ**

AS THE FEATURED SPEAKER AT THE twentieth annual Darwin festival at Salem State College in Salem, Massachusetts, Harvard professor Stephen Jay Gould is lecturing to a packed auditorium—not only professional biologists and students but also retirees and blue-collar workers. It is the birthday of both Abraham Lincoln and Charles Darwin (who happened to be born in the same year as well as on the same day), and Gould is talking about American history. Stocky and clean shaven, with a plump baby face and thick graying hair, he wears a tie in honor of the occasion but no jacket. He is unfolding bit by bit what he calls his Back to the Future theory of history, his belief that hundreds of chance occurrences got us where we are today. If Robert E. Lee's second in command hadn't misunderstood his orders, Gould suggests, the South might have won the Battle of Gettysburg, and then the war, and we might still be a divided country. He's building up to his central theme: that history is unpredictable and serendipitous, that human existence arose by chance, and that life, intelligent or otherwise, is devoid of any special significance in the larger scheme of things.

Toward the end of his rhythmic, free-form lecture, Gould pauses in mid-sentence. He has noticed that one person in the crowd of nearly a thousand is quietly leaving through a back exit. "Don't you want to hear the last ten minutes?" he cries out in obvious distress. "I don't mean to be arrogant about my status, but most of these folks you have all the time. Me you only got for a little while."

Such pugnacity is hardly surprising to Gould's numerous admirers and critics. For years, he has been an aggressive voice of reason in the argument against creationism and other varieties of pseudoscience. But Gould, who seems to thrive on controversy, is also entangled in a battle with a school of fierce anti-creationists called evolutionary psychologists, who believe that human nature is largely mapped out in our genes. Most recently, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology psychology professor Steven Pinker has been responsible for generating public interest in evolutionary psychology (EP). Not only does Pinker have a gift for the clear expression of complicated ideas, but, with his good looks and stylish clothes, he knows how to get media attention. His first book, *The Language Instinct* (1995), was an engaging discussion of the nature of language and its evolution. In 1997, Pinker's *How the Mind Works* appeared to great fanfare and quickly became a national best-seller.

The disagreement between Pinker and Gould is the latest variation on the old nature-versus-nurture debate that has been raging for centuries. The most recent skirmishes date back to the 1970s, when sociobiology, a new discipline dedicated to explaining social behavior in biological

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DARWIN!

terms, was catapulted into the limelight. Gould became a leading early critic of sociobiology, penning eloquent disquisitions on the ability of humans—not their genes—to determine their own fate. But in the 1980s, molecular biologists began identifying more and more genes involved in human diseases and behavior. Sociobiology once again gripped the public imagination, but this time under the name of evolutionary psychology—sociobiology with a relentless focus on human psychology.

The argument between evolutionary psychologists and their critics centers on elemental mysteries of human nature. It is about the sort of tough questions that kids ask—Why are some people bad? Why do some breeds of dogs kill squirrels, and can they be taught not to?—as well as some more adult concerns: Are older men genetically programmed to abandon their longtime wives and take up with younger women? To what extent is intelligence, sexual preference, or the capacity to nurture mapped out in our genes? How deeply entrenched is the hatred and distrust of warring ethnic groups throughout the world?

THERE IS a certain poetry in the fact that Gould's office is located in Harvard's venerable Museum of Comparative Zoology, founded in 1859 by Louis Agassiz, its first director and Harvard's last creationist. The walls of Gould's office bear the names of the animal classes, the letters visible in faded black paint dating from the days when the room was still an exhibition hall. The office itself is the size of a basketball court, filled with crowded bookshelves and tables piled high with the great diversity of the world Gould celebrates in his writing. This is the perfect Gould habitat, sprawling and packed with stuff.

A brilliant essayist and lecturer, Gould is the most popular science writer in America, which is remarkable because he engages serious ideas and draws from a rich store of knowledge of literature and history. In addition to half a dozen books, Gould has published nine collections of the essays he's been writing for *Natural History* over the last twenty-five years. He thinks of himself as a scientist in the tradition of Galileo, who was unusual in his time for writing in Italian, the language of the people, rather than Latin, which was then the norm for serious scientific discourse. He is still troubled by the fact that his friend the late astronomer Carl Sagan was denied entrance to the National Academy of Sciences. "Scientists will say, 'he was a popular writer *but* also a good scientist,'" Gould complains. "The *but* has to be changed to an *and*."

Gould himself has been the object of a fair amount of sniping over the quality of his science. His theory of punctuated equilibrium—the idea that sudden rapid changes in evolutionary history are followed by long periods of relative stability—has a limited following among his colleagues. Gould proposed his theory—sometimes called jerky evolution—as an alternative to the classical theory of slow, continuous evolution. A Gould antagonist, Richard Dawkins, the English evolutionary biologist responsible for the term "selfish gene," has been known to refer to the theory of punctuated evolution as "evolution by jerks." In his most recent book, *Unweaving the Rainbow* (1998), Dawkins characterizes Gould as a guy who's been "seduced by bad poetry."

WHEREAS Gould prefers to see human behavior as a complex and unpredictable interaction of culture, and a highly pliable set of genetic potentials, EPists have little patience with such a wishy-washy notion. They prefer to break down human psychology into a set of "complex adaptations," *specific traits exquisitely suited to perform their functions,* in the often repeated mantra. To EPists, it is a given that everything complicated and interesting about animals, and humans in particular—ranging from the way we find mates, to the working of the eye, to the ability to detect cheaters in social interactions—is the result of the long, slow, incremental process of Darwinian natural selection.

"You can't have a parent without an eye and an offspring with one," Pinker explains

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to me. "It's all gradual and Darwinian." We are sitting at the dining room table in his newly renovated condo a few blocks north of Harvard Square. The apartment, like Pinker's understated dark dress shirt and black jeans, is up-to-the-minute and impeccable. Every counter and surface is shiny and clear; there's not a stray magazine or envelope in sight. It's the kind of home that makes you suspect that there must be a back room where all the mess is stored.

The eye is the classic example of a complex adaptation. As Pinker explains it, an animal picks up a random mutation for a clearer lens, which makes it better able to avoid predators and find mates than animals with less clear lenses. This individual will give rise to offspring with better eyes, and over the course of generations, animals with clearer lenses will take over the population. At some point down the line, one of these animals may acquire another random mutation, this time for a rounder eyeball, which enables the eye better to focus images. In this way, mutation by mutation, over hundreds of generations, the multiple components of a complex function are acquired.

For Gould, it is Pinker's insistence on natural selection as the only valid scientific explanation for the origin of complex animal behaviors that is so galling. Although Gould acknowledges the importance of natural selection, he believes that the EPists have failed to appreciate other principles of evolutionary change such as random genetic drift, catastrophic events, and the constraints of basic laws of form. Furthermore, he contends, by identifying a genetic origin for many complex human behaviors, the EPists would have us believe that human behaviors are far more entrenched and immutable than they really are. Whereas Pinker argues that all of our complex mental functioning has been crafted over thousands of generations by natural selection to achieve a particular end, Gould believes that human attributes as basic as language may be accidental.

IT WAS a British graduate student named Bill Hamilton who in the early 1960s had the insight that leads directly to Pinker's view of the human mind. Believing he'd forfeited his chance for a Ph.D. from London University by pursuing his heretical approach to the study of altruism, Hamilton sat for hours in train stations and public gardens to relieve the loneliness of his student rooms. While he sat, he mulled over a startling new idea, which he later named the theory of inclusive fitness.

Today, Hamilton is a tall, white-haired man of sixty-three, a Royal Society professor at Oxford widely considered the most influential evolutionary thinker since Darwin. "I had the feeling that I might be a crank," recalls Hamilton of his student days. He describes three experiences that influenced his thinking. As a schoolboy, he recognized that he felt a greater sense of obligation to his brothers and sister than to his school friends. Also, his mother kept bees, and he'd seen how the sister worker bees often sacrificed their lives for the good of the colony. Lastly, he had been deeply dissatisfied with the lectures on evolution he received as an undergraduate at Cambridge University, where it seemed to him that his professors did not give Darwin's mechanism of natural selection its proper due.

Hamilton realized he could explain the puzzling phenomenon of sister bees sacrificing themselves for the good of the hive by shifting the perspective from the survival of an animal's offspring to the dissemination of its genes. Thanks to a peculiar system of sex assignment, a female bee shares more genes with her sisters than with her direct descendants. If the goal is to make the greatest number of copies of her genes, a female bee is better off helping her mother make more sisters than she is producing her own offspring. In 1964, Hamilton pointed this out in a seminal two-part paper titled "The Genetical Evolution of Social Behavior." More generally, his gene's-eye point of view made it clear that the traditional Darwinian concern with an organism's investment in its children was too limited. Post-Hamilton, sacrifice for siblings and more distant relatives as well as one's own children made sense. In 1976, Dawkins popularized this idea in an enormously influential book, *The Selfish Gene*.

But if it hadn't been for the Harvard entomologist E.O. Wilson, Hamilton's theory would very likely never have come to Dawkins's attention. Wilson seized on the idea and prodded his reluctant peers to recognize its significance. At sixty-nine, Wilson still has the lean, angular build of a marathon runner. Though he has an almost courtly conversational style and retains the aura of a southern gentleman, he has a relentlessly driven, competitive nature that has resulted in an extraordinarily productive career. There are many folktales surrounding Wilson that illustrate one or another of the qualities that have made him successful, including the story of his reaction to Hamilton's 1964 paper. In one widely circulated version, Wilson is sent a copy of the paper to review, skims it, and, believing it to be the ravings of another manic graduate student, tosses it in the trash. Hours later, in the middle of the night, he realizes he's made a terrible mistake, bolts out of bed, and rushes back to the lab to retrieve the paper before the janitors empty the trash.

"That's a great story," Wilson laughs, "but it's not true." The truth, he insists, is that he read the paper on a long train ride from Boston to Miami (he's a reluctant flier). Hamilton's idea struck him as improbable and too simple, and it didn't seem to lend itself to broad applications. But when Wilson couldn't find a logical flaw in the paper, he grew angry. He, not Hamilton, was the world authority on social insects, and certainly no one else was going to explain the behavior of insect societies. Yet the more he thought about it, the more he became convinced that the theory was fundamentally correct. By the time he reached Miami, he was a convert. "I would never throw out an article like that," he explains. "At the very worst, I'd file it for future reference."

With Hamilton's ideas in mind, Wilson went on to formulate the basic tenets of sociobiology. In 1975, he published a beautifully illustrated overview of his theory titled *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis*. If he had confined himself to animals other than ourselves, as he'd originally intended, his life would have been more peaceful. But in a characteristically ambitious finale, he tacked on a chapter extending his theory to humans. Our species is genetically programmed to be warlike and territorial, he wrote, and males will typically dominate females in human social hierarchies. He hypothesized the existence of genes for spitefulness and homosexuality, genes for conformity that make humans easy to indoctrinate, and genes that make us favor kin and be wary of strangers. In a section on hunter-gatherer societies, Wilson cataloged the behavior patterns of various members. He found that, just as in ant colonies, different members of the groups played different roles. There were individuals of

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higher status, leaders and outstanding specialists, for example, who generally established themselves by their mid-thirties. These elites, he wrote, do more than their share of work and dominate the group's sluggish, unproductive members.

Inside the academic anthill, there was no doubt as to which kind of ant Wilson was. Already, as a graduate student, he'd sensed he had a special destiny, as another Wilson tale suggests: He and a fellow graduate student are driving back to Harvard after attending a meeting at which all the greatest minds in evolutionary biology had gathered. Wilson's friend is awestruck at having been in the presence of such greatness. After driving along in silence for a while, Wilson turns to him and says, "It shouldn't be very hard to get to the top of that heap."

In Cambridge, the reaction to Wilson's book was intensely negative. Fifteen local scientists, including Gould and Richard Lewontin, a universally admired population geneticist, formed the Sociobiology Study Group. Together, Lewontin, who had been brought up by a French nanny on Manhattan's Upper East Side, and Gould, the Queens-born son of a Marxist court stenographer, led the opposition. With his ease with mathematics and a powerful analytic mind, Lewontin brought rigor and salience to the critique of sociobiology. For months, the small group of allies plotted against sociobiology in Lewontin's office. At his own desk one floor above, Wilson had no idea what was brewing just below his feet. In November 1975, the Sociobiology Study Group published a letter in *The New York Review of Books (NYRB)*.

The letter, signed by all fifteen members of the study group, stated its objections in no uncertain terms. Sociobiology, it asserted, is part of a tradition of biological determinism that has "provided an important basis for the enactment of sterilization laws and restrictive immigration laws by the United States...and also for the eugenics policies which led to the establishment of gas chambers in Nazi Germany." The invocation of Nazism was clearly intended to cause alarm. Less widely appreciated, however, was that there had been a pseudoscientific crusade in the early part of this century to improve the American gene pool. Laws passed in more than thirty states led to the sterilization of tens of thousands of people judged mentally feeble or morally inferior, and immigration from nations deemed of inferior genetic stock was restricted. Gould and Lewontin's letter sounded a warning bell: Supposedly objective science had been used—and could be again—to justify dubious politics and prejudices.

TO THE CONSTERNATION OF HIS CRITICS, GOULD BELIEVES THAT HUMAN ATTRIBUTES AS BASIC AS LANGUAGE MAY BE ACCIDENTAL.

Wilson was not one to take the Sociobiology Study Group attack lying down. After licking his wounds for several weeks, he began a counteroffensive. Since both Lewontin and Gould were widely known for their radical politics, he devoted himself to the study of Marxist economic theory so as better to understand the "enemy in the field." In December 1975, his rebuttal appeared as a letter in the *NYRB*. In it, he accused the authors of intentionally distorting his meanings in order to make a case against him. In March of the following year, Wilson wrote a more

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detailed reply to his detractors in *BioScience,* a professional journal. In that article, he refers to a statement by a Harvard professor characterizing Wilson as a "privileged member of Western industrial society whose book attempts to preserve the status quo." Wilson points out that, as a Harvard professor, the author of the statement enjoyed identical privileges.

Today, Wilson recalls those days with a wry chuckle. "Gould and Lewontin going on in Marxist tones—we're talking about a bygone era, in an intellectual as well as a political sense. Sometimes we wondered, 'Who did Lewontin think he was, writing those letters from his Vermont dacha?'" The Vermont dacha is a reference to Lewontin's cabin in southern Vermont, where he has long spent as much time as possible, talking crops and weather with local farmers and acting the part of crusty old New England codger.

In 1978, Wilson was a featured speaker at the symposium on sociobiology held by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in Washington, D.C. Gould was scheduled to speak at the same session. Wilson, who had fractured his ankle jogging, had decided to deliver his speech from his seat onstage rather than make his way to the lectern. A few minutes after he had begun to talk, a group of protesters from the International Committee Against Racism (INCAR) stormed the stage. One dumped a pitcher of water over his head while the others chanted, "Wilson, you're all wet!" A few minutes later, the protesters withdrew, and the audience broke out in a spontaneous standing ovation for the injured, dripping Wilson. Gould took the microphone and quoted Lenin on the inappropriate use of violence. Later he explained that the attack on Wilson had been an "infantile disorder" of socialism.

Did Gould and Lewontin's attacks push Wilson further down the path toward human sociobiology? "Their attacks and other criticisms coming particularly from the New Left saying that this was bad science, and that I was racist and capitalist, were one of the major stimuli for me to move ahead," Wilson says. "Otherwise I might have delayed a considerable period of time before I wrote a book aimed at a broad audience." In 1978, he brought out *On Human Nature,* a broad defense of sociobiological theory. "Not just to answer them," he says, "but perhaps in part to respond to what I considered scurrilous and unfounded criticism." A few years later, Wilson began to move in new directions, becoming a tireless and influential crusader for the cause of biodiversity, the movement devoted to the preservation of the diversity of animal and plant species.

AN INCONSPICUOUS directory in the dim lobby of the Museum of Comparative Zoology Laboratories informs you that Lewontin's office is on the third floor and Wilson's is on the fourth. It's a long, slow elevator ride up. A veteran of the sociobiology wars recalls unwittingly stepping into the elevator with Wilson and Lewontin in the late 1970s, shortly after Wilson had published a new monograph on ants. The tension was nearly unbearable as the elevator inched its way to the third floor. No one uttered a word. As the doors opened and Lewontin got out, he turned to Wilson and said, "I'm glad that you're doing real science again."

A central hall with laboratories on either side leads from the elevator to the Lewontin lab common room. In it, there's a vast rectangular wooden table covered with old copies of the *NYRB* and scientific journals. Mounted to the wall, a magnificent moose head has watched over generations of students. A minute after the appointed hour, Lewontin appears and ushers me into his office. Lean and fit, with a round face and a full head of dark hair, one would never guess that he's seventy. Though he's one of Harvard's most eminent faculty members, there's no sign of his special status—no couches, Oriental rugs, honorary degrees, or art—not a luxury or frill of any kind.

Why is it, I ask, that he objects to the Wilson-Pinker view of major human behaviors as adaptations crafted by natural selection? "Instead of talking about adaptations," Lewontin replies, "we should say organisms do the things they can do: Fish gotta swim and birds gotta fly.

"We'd be better off flying," he continues, though he, like Wilson, is afraid of flying in airplanes. "It would increase our fitness, we'd be better able to flee from predators. But if we flap our arms, we don't get any lift." He stands up and starts flapping his arms to illustrate. "Even if I picked up a pair of Ping-Pong paddles, it wouldn't help." He's walking around the room now, madly flapping his arms and still not getting any lift. "Until you're doing something, you're not doing it," Lewontin says by way of summary, "and natural selection can't help. What natural selection does is to make more efficient what the organism is already doing."

Lewontin's argument is that natural selection alone can't explain the origin of flight or of any complicated new function. Unless a little bit of change gives an animal a little bit of an advantage, the change won't be selected for, and obviously a little bit of a wing doesn't do any good. Darwin was well aware of the problem and devoted considerable thought to it. "An organ originally constructed for one purpose...may be converted to one for a wholly different purpose," he wrote in *The Origin of Species* (1859). This principle of functional shift makes it impossible to presume that any complex adaptation was crafted by natural selection, argue Gould and Lewontin. In particular, it doesn't make sense to say that a specific human behavior was selected for its current function when its original function may have been entirely different. Gould later proposed the term "exaptation" (to be distinguished from "adaptation") for features arising along these circuitous pathways. This is the first line of defense against Wilson-Pinker sociobiological thinking.

But Gould and Lewontin went further. In 1979, they wrote a paper for a British conference on adaptation and natural selection titled "The Spandrels of San Marco," in which they argued that many aspects of the design of animals are purely accidental. The paper has acquired legendary status. There even exists a collection of essays using the techniques of postmodern literary criticism to analyze the spandrels paper as scientific rhetoric.

Gould and Lewontin cleverly chose an example from the history of architecture to illustrate their point. Spandrels are unintended by-products of an architectural design. At the medieval cathedral of San Marco in Venice, the spandrels are four triangular spaces inadvertently created when the church's dome was mounted on four rounded arches. In the case of the cathedral, Lewontin and Gould argued, it would be easy to infer that the lavishly decorated spandrel is the heart of the architect's design. By analogy, "adaptationists," as Lewontin and Gould dub sociobiolog-

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ically inclined biologists, mistake a by-product of an adaptation for a genuine adaptation. The origin of a complex adaptation is impossible to know, and any such attempt to invent hypotheses is, according to Lewontin and Gould, unscientific speculation. Critics of sociobiology label these hypothetical scenarios "Just So Stories," after Rudyard Kipling's children's book in which fanciful explanations are offered for adaptations such as the elephant's trunk.

Lewontin added another important piece to the case in his 1984 book, *Not In Our Genes.* Even if it were possible to understand an individual in terms of his genes and environment, he argued, we still would not understand group behavior. The whole could not, even in principle, be reduced to the sum of its parts.

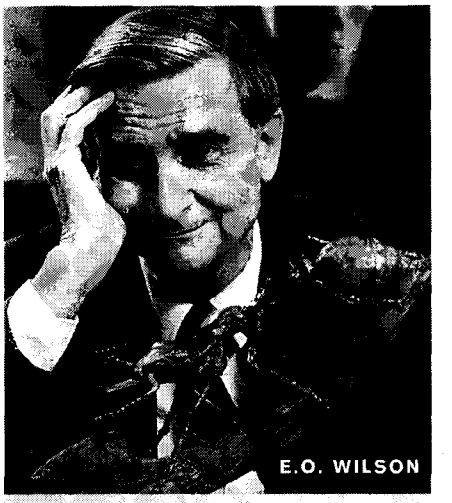
For a period in the early 1980s, it seemed Gould and Lewontin's views had gained the upper hand. But it was precisely at this time that the revolution in molecular biology spun into high gear. With the development of new techniques for the sequencing and manipulation of DNA, it became easier and easier to identify and clone genes. Suddenly genes were being identified for just about everything. In *Drosophila melanogaster,* the common fruit fly and beloved laboratory organism of generations of geneticists, genes were found that affected sexual behavior, the pace of the internal clock, learning, and memory. Not only that, but many virtually identical genes were found in humans, whose evolutionary line diverged from insects more than half a billion years ago. Simultaneously, molecular biologists started identifying the genes that play roles in human disorders, such as Alzheimer's, Huntington's, and Parkinson's diseases. As the decade progressed, the flood of DNA information led to the formation of a generously funded human genome project to sequence the entire three billion base pairs of human chromosomal DNA.

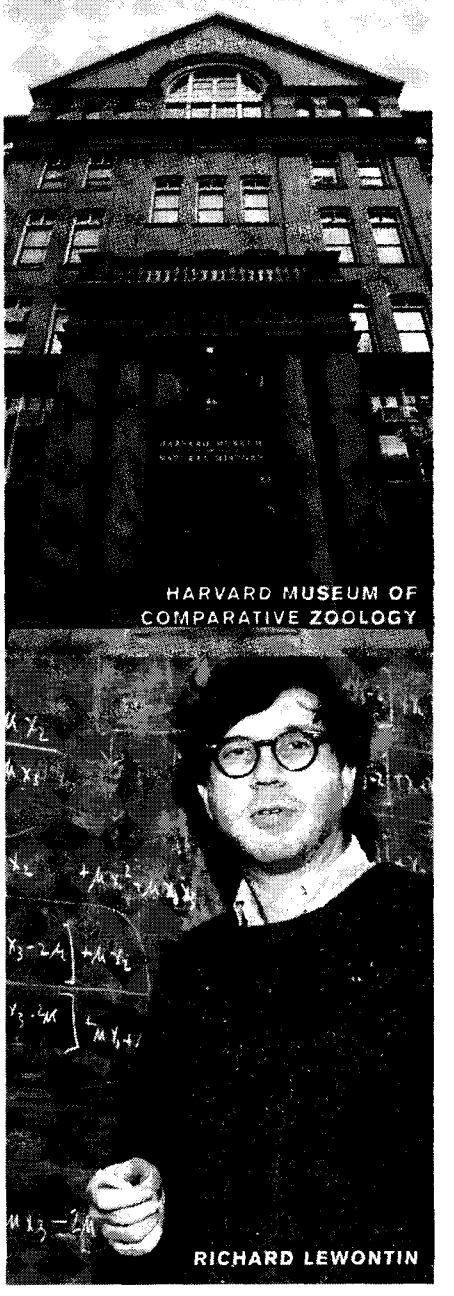
Now Gould and Lewontin were on the defensive. They had always argued that it was bad science to break up an animal into individual traits or behaviors in order to claim that they are determined by particular, selectable genes. In the early days, the Sociobiology Study Group had criticized the idea that there were genes for specific and variable forms of human behavior, including spite, aggression, xenophobia, conformity, and homosexuality. Later, Gould expanded the argument to include even body parts. "Hundreds of genes contribute to the building of most body parts and their action is channeled through a kaleidoscopic series of environmental influences," he wrote in a *Natural History* essay.

Yet by the early 1990s, gene-based explanations for human behavior were on the rise. The stage was set for the reemergence of sociobiology under the new name of evolutionary psychology. In 1992, the husband-wife psychologist-anthropologist team of Leda Cosmides and John Tooby laid down the manifesto for the new discipline of EP in their introduction to an edited volume of original papers titled *The Adapted Mind.* EP was essentially an extension of Wilson's program applied exclusively to humans, with a few amendments to quell the leftist critique. Proponents of EP are quick to emphasize that human nature was crafted by natural selection to solve the problems of life on the African savanna 1.8 million years ago and that traits that may have been advantageous then, like xenophobia and aggression, may not confer a selective advantage in the modern world. Hoping to avoid the criticisms that were leveled against the first sociobiologists, the new generation insists it is most interested in understanding the evolution of universal features of the human species, not in the particular genes that make one person different from another, such as genes for IQ or homosexuality.

In 1997, an especially acrimonious debate over EP broke out when Gould

THE TENSION WAS NEARLY UNBEARABLE AS THE ELEVATOR INCHED ITS WAY TO THE THIRD FLOOR. AS THE DOORS OPENED, LEWONTIN TURNED TO WILSON AND SAID, "I'M GLAD THAT YOU'RE DOING REAL SCIENCE AGAIN."


E.O. WILSON


HARVARD MUSEUM OF COMPARATIVE ZOOLOGY

RICHARD LEWONTIN

FROM BOTTOM: RICHARD LEWONTIN; JEFF SCHER; JON CHASE/HARVARD NEWS OFFICE

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took on the new school of sociobiologists in a long two-part article in the *NYRB*. Describing his foes as "Darwinian fundamentalists," he addressed himself to what he saw as the essential weakness of the adaptationist approach: "The human brain must be bursting with spandrels that are essential to human nature and vital to our self-understanding but that arose as non-adaptations, and are therefore outside the compass of evolutionary psychology, or any other ultra-Darwinian theory."

No wallflower when it comes to protecting his turf, Steven Pinker leaped to defend his science. "The ideas of EP are not as stupid as Gould makes them out to be," he wrote in a letter to the *NYRB* published later that year. "Indeed, they are nothing like what Gould makes them out to be." It doesn't matter, Pinker argued, whether a complex adaptation originated as an exaptation or a spandrel; if it later serves a useful function for the organism, it must have been acted on by natural selection to serve that function. "That there is a particular school of adaptationism is a rhetorical device," Pinker told me. "The school is just about everybody," he asserted, referring to the legions of scientists who study animal behavior using the sociobiological paradigm. "Gould and Lewontin have influence over social scientists and literary types who read *The New York Review of Books* and *Natural History*, they didn't like the direction sociobiology was going. Marxists don't want there to be an innate human nature, particularly not one that smacks of selfishness, greed, and aggression. They always say that a person's science can't be divorced from his politics, but they never apply this argument to themselves."

In the case of Lewontin, at any rate, this charge is often made. "There's almost no scientific subject on which he's positive," says Bill Hamilton. "I can't understand how such a good mind can be so negative about science per se. The politics always comes first. He doesn't admit it, but that's the case." Writing in his autobiography, *Naturalist* (1994), Wilson says that Lewontin "was stage-cast for the role of contrarian. He possessed a deep ambivalence that kept both friend and foe off balance." Before publication, Wilson sent Lewontin a copy of the manuscript asking for his comments. After a long period of silence, Wilson had his assistant hunt Lewontin down. A few days later, the manuscript was returned unopened with a letter attached to it. "Dear Ed," Lewontin wrote, "Given that our disagreements are so fundamental and broad and given the wide-spread misapprehension that they are personal rather than scientific, you can always say with complete honesty that you gave me the opportunity to comment on your manuscript and I declined. Autobiography is not a genre I am tempted either to read or to write. In order to get through life we all create elaborate fictions about ourselves, but I have always felt that these were better left to the hours between waking and sleeping."

Gould, who has always been somewhat more interested than Lewontin in finding common ground with his opponents, has recently shown some openness to EP ideas about the differences between the sexual attitudes of males and females. In the EP view, males are likely to be promiscuous because it is advantageous to spread their sperm far and wide. Females, on the other hand, are programmed to be more selective: Their eggs are more precious than male sperm, and they are strapped into months of gestation and suckling after conception. In his *NYRB* attack on EP, Gould goes so far as to call this line of reasoning the "most promising" EP has to offer, and he admits that it "probably does underlie some different and broadly general emotional propensities of human males and females." However, he cautions the EPists against pushing this theory too far and suffering the fate of Freudians, who "elevated a limited guide into a rigid creed that became more of an untestable and unchangeable religion than a science."

Lewontin, who married his high school sweetheart and can to this day be seen walking hand in hand across Harvard Yard with her, takes a much harder line. "I'm a man, and I don't go around screwing young girls," he says. "I'm human, and so I have to be explained."

One can almost see Lewontin hiking through the Vermont woods shaking his head in despair at the loss of Comrade Gould. There had been no more articulate spokesman in the battle against bourgeois decadence.

MEANWHILE, Pinker, busy promoting his latest book, *Words and Rules: The Ingredients of Language* (Norton), marches forward. In a recent appearance in London, Pinker and Dawkins held a public forum titled "Is Science Killing the Soul?" which was attended by 2300 people and sold out weeks in advance. Pinker spoke of the fiction of the unified self. "It's only an illusion that there's a president in the Oval Office of the brain who oversees the activity of everything," he said, in what undoubtedly struck many as a particularly apt metaphor.

"IT'S ONLY AN ILLUSION THAT THERE'S A PRESIDENT IN THE OVAL OFFICE OF THE BRAIN WHO OVERSEES THE ACTIVITY OF EVERYTHING," SAYS PINKER.

The notion that there is no unified self is fundamental to EP. If the brain is a collection of computers, each one of which performs a highly specialized function, then it makes sense to invoke natural selection acting over millions of years to account for the existence of those computers.

This view of the mind broken up into an array of independently evolved modules is disquieting to many. As the Rutgers philosopher Jerry Fodor, the author of a forthcoming book titled *The Mind Doesn't Work That Way* (MIT), puts it, "If there is a community of computers in my head, there had also better be somebody who is in charge, and, by God, it had better

DONNA COVENEY/MIT

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be me." If one does not believe that human intelligence is the sum of an array of computers, then one must postulate the existence of some more general cognitive ability that gives us the capacity for complex thought. And this general ability, Fodor believes, may be the result of a small but crucial evolutionary shift that distinguished our brains from the brains of other primates.

Like Fodor, Lewontin and Gould argue that the EPists have it wrong: Language, consciousness, and most of our distinctively human mental capacities are side effects of the fact that our brain grew big for other reasons. Furthermore, they caution, these reasons cannot be reconstructed. Our extraordinary human abilities are epiphenomena of "all those loose connections with nothing to do," explains Lewontin. As an example of a nonadaptive trait, he offers the uniquely human ability to use recursion in language, that is, to make sentences of the form: "I say that Noam Chomsky says, when people say..." Though chimps can be taught to compose simple sentences of the form "I want" or "I see" on a computer, they cannot be taught to use recursion.

Does Lewontin have a theory about the origin of this unique linguistic ability of humans? "You could invent a story," he explains with distaste. "You could say it was an advantage to early human beings in being able to say, 'I saw Joe doing that,' but that's just yak!"

Pinker insists that our ability to use language has evolved because language offered a selective advantage. "Being articulate is highly valued in all cultures," he says. "Tribal chiefs are high in verbal skills and have more offspring."

It is symbolically fitting that Gould and Lewontin were teaching their undergraduate course on evolution for the last time this spring while a few hundred yards down the road Pinker and a recently tenured Harvard animal behaviorist named Mark Hauser were giving a popular graduate seminar on evolutionary psychology.

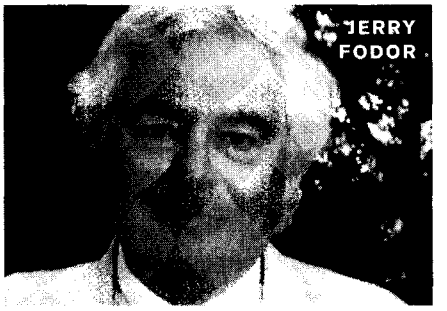
The point of Pinker and Hauser's course is to trace the origins of human thought. There is no doubt that we can learn a lot about human language from studying apes and birds, Hauser told me after the seminar one afternoon. The way birds learn their songs is strikingly similar to the way humans learn language.

In his characteristically acerbic way, Lewontin dismisses this idea. It is simply impossible to say how novel abilities like human language arose. He jibes: "One way to get around the problem that language is a novelty is to define it in such a way that doesn't make it a novelty. You'll say bird twitter is language." In a 1998 article titled "The Evolution of Cognition: Questions We Will Never Answer," Lewontin wrote, "It might be interesting to know how cognition (whatever that is) arose and spread and changed, but we cannot know. Tough luck." This spring, Lewontin will publish a collection of his essays with the appropriately contrarian title *It Ain't Necessarily So*.

EVEN IF GOD were to descend on Cambridge and part the waters of the Charles River at Lewontin's feet, it would still be unthinkable to imagine the skeptical biologist embracing religion. Gould, on the other hand, has recently been evincing a new sympathy for the realm of the unscientific. In his most recent book, *Rocks of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life* (1999), he not only sets out terms for a peaceful coexistence with the obdurate religious believers among us but seems to offer another defense against the sociobiological threat. His thesis is that it makes perfect sense to see science and religion as distinct and complementary forms of human endeavor: Science addresses the "factual character of the natural world"; religion is concerned with spiritual meaning and morality.

This dualism stands in stark contrast to the views of Wilson, Dawkins, and Pinker, who categorically deny the existence of a soul or spirit. Indeed, from the outset, it was Wilson's goal to deny the existence of an independent moral realm. In *On Human Nature*, he says, "Human behavior...is the circuitous technique by which human genetic material has and will be kept intact. Morality has no other demonstrable ultimate function." *Consilience* (1998), Wilson's latest and most ambitious statement to date, takes an even more radical position, arguing that "there is intrinsically only one class of explanation." He goes on to make the bold assertion that "all tangible phenomena, from the birth of stars to the workings of social institutions, are based on material processes that are ultimately reducible, however long and tortuous the sequences, to the laws of physics."

"IF THERE IS A COMMUNITY OF COMPUTERS IN MY HEAD, THERE HAD ALSO BETTER BE SOMEBODY WHO IS IN CHARGE AND BY GOD, IT HAD BETTER BE ME." JAMES FODOR



Gould insists that it is not possible to reduce ethics to sociobiology or to unify knowledge by subsuming one theory in another. Even if human traits like xenophobia and aggression, for example, were in the end shown to be the result of adaptations in the Pleistocene era, Gould contends, science alone will not suffice as an explanatory system. The man who largely made his name insisting on the purposelessness of life has found a place in his heart for religion. But that's not to say Gould has turned into any kind of cryptocreationist. No matter who turns out to be right in the end, he and his adaptationist foes can at least agree with Darwin that "whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved."

James Schwartz is a writer who lives in Brookline, Massachusetts.

COURTESY JERRY FODOR

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continued from page 5

strongly appears that their position is unsustainable and should therefore be regarded as the philosophical equivalent to amateur brain surgery.

JOE WHITE
Department of History
University of Pittsburgh

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

I have read with the greatest interest Laura Secor's impressive essay "Testaments Betrayed" [September], which provides a judicious insight into the origins and subsequent evolution of the Yugoslav journal *Praxis*.

In her essay, the author quotes from an article I wrote in 1986 criticizing Mihailo Markovic, Ljubomir Tadic, and Zagorka Golubovic and suggests that I signed this article with an assumed name in order to disguise my Croatian background. This assumption could not be further from the truth. To begin with, my name does not imply a specifically Croatian background, since my forename is found also among many Bosnians, Macedonians, Montenegrins, and Serbians, while my surname is not Slav in origin at all (the Croats are, of course, a Slav people). Second, Markovic, Tadic, and Golubovic knew very well that I wrote under that pseudonym. Third, I have never been tempted to hide my national origins, since I am perfectly happy with being Croat and, indeed, have never wished to be anything else.

I used an assumed name when writing about political events in Yugoslavia in order to hide my Yugoslav identity—because I was afraid that my critical stance, and in particular my recommendation back in 1984 that Kosovo be made Yugoslavia's seventh republic, could lead to my being prevented from visiting my homeland. Those who have been to the Dalmatian part of Croatia will understand what a cruel punishment that would be.

BRANKA MAGAS
London, England

MAD ABOUT MENCHÚ

If there ever was a case calling for responsible journalism, the Menchú-Stoll controversy ["The Unmaking of Rigoberta Menchú," July/August] is it. While the Guatemalan military mouths David Stoll's phrases, Menchú remains the only indigenous leader in the world with international standing. Much is at stake, and every journalistic account is an intervention.

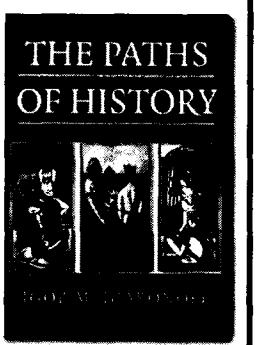
At least some knowledge of (a) Guatemala and (b) *testimonio* should be required to address this controversy. Hal Cohen's lamentable article lacks both. As a result, he can do little more than identify with his fellow journalist-hero, taking on the same hubris that drives Stoll's distorted and reprehensible book. Mainstream journalism on the issue has mostly shared these features, but *Lingua Franca*'s readers, not to mention the peoples of Guatemala,were entitled to better.

MARY LOUISE PRATT
Professor of Humanities
Stanford University

I have absolutely no objection to Hal Cohen's slanted defense of David Stoll. He is within his rights to defend him, even if I disagree with his conclusions. What bothers me is his

Innovative and Important

The Paths of History
Igor M. Diakonoff
Foreword by
Geoffrey Hosking



This is a broad and ambitious study of the entire history of humanity that takes as its point of departure Marx's theory of social evolution. Professor Diakonoff has expanded Marx's five stages of development to eight. As the book moves through these various stages, the reader is drawn into a remarkable and thought-provoking study of the process of the history of the human race that focuses on the wide range of factors (economic, social, military-technological, and socio-psychological) that have influenced our development from palaeolithic times to the present day.

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misuse of my name and the lampooning of my positions on this matter.

Cohen also misquotes the title of the book I'm editing. Its correct title is: "The Properties of Words: Rigoberta Menchú, David Stoll, and Identity Politics in *Central* America." This is not casual. The gist of my argument is that Central America has never been allowed to be truly itself, but has always lived in the shadow of either the United States or Latin America, and it is a cultural space struggling for visibility. Menchú has been its most recognized subject and thus a major contributor to this struggle for Central American visibility. The mistake in the title alone is part of the problem we all have to confront: We are not *Latin* Americans, an identity primarily associated with the larger countries of South America: Brazil, Argentina, Chile. We are *Central* Americans. And that's why the defense of Menchú was so acrimonious. Just when, as Central Americans, we were beginning to achieve a certain degree of visibility in the overcrowded arena of U.S. identity politics, and struggling to build a space of our own here, separate from Chicanos, from Cuban Americans, and such, David Stoll's book becomes a serious blow to the credibility of all Central Americans.

I am the only Guatemalan quoted in Cohen's article. It is interesting that the "cautious support" that Cohen argues Stoll's book has earned from "other scholars" all comes from Americans. The serious academic voices are, once again, only those of Americans. This is precisely the type of situation that, Sisyphus-like, we Central Americans have tried to change over the years. Luckily, not all academics think like Cohen. Recently, the Latin American Studies Association executive council unanimously approved my candidacy for vice president (to accede to the presidency) of that professional association.

ARTURO ARIAS
Guatemala City, Guatemala

A FEW FINE MEN

Regarding "Who Owns Arthur Koestler?" [September], I know both David Cesarani and Michael Scammell, one through his work on the Holocaust and the other through his presidency of PEN. They are both fine men, but Cesarani seems to have broken both an oral and a written contract and is therefore liable for damages. Scammell, on the other hand, cannot act as a gatekeeper and prevent people from writing books.

It's a tough call and a sad case, doubly sad, being over the literary remains of such a lout as Arthur Koestler. Thank God it wasn't a bio of Mother Teresa.

Jack Nusan Porter
Adjunct Professor of Sociology
University of Massachusetts at Lowell

CORRECTION

In "The Heirs of Ayn Rand" [September], we reported that the journal *Full Context* is published by the Institute for Objectivist Studies. The journal is actually published by an informal coalition of objectivists in Michigan who are not affiliated with IOS.

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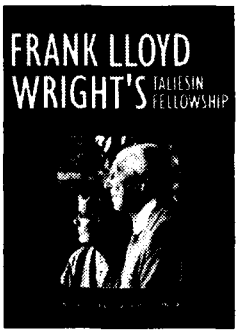
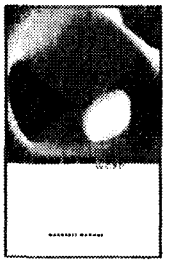


GODS OF THE WORD



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DREAM ON

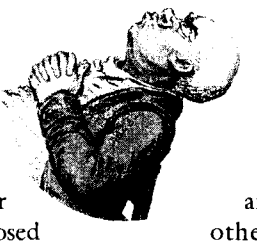
DOES SLEEP MAKE ANY SENSE?

MODERN PHILOSOPHY IS founded in dreams—doubly so, in fact. It was a series of peculiar dream episodes, one of them involving a melon, that convinced the young René Descartes that his vocation was to establish a new philosophy. And it was through his "dream argument" (as it came to be called) that Descartes, in the first of his *Meditations,* began to make his way to a position of universal doubt—the necessary prelude, as he saw it, to the reconstruction of human knowledge on a secure foundation. Descartes noted that I might think "I am seated by the fire, attired in a dressing-gown...when in fact I am lying undressed in bed."

This Cartesian question—How can I be sure I am not always dreaming?—had earlier occurred to Plato and Cicero. It is one of the now classic philosophical problems about dreams. The other classic problem—Can I be immoral in dreams?—was raised by St. Augustine, who was perplexed that he continued to fornicate in his dreams even after he had renounced such wickedness in his waking life.

Contemporary philosophers have tended to focus on a third question—Do dreams amount to experiences that occur during sleep? This is largely the consequence of Norman Malcolm's book *Dreaming,* which appeared in 1959. Malcolm, a friend and disciple of Wittgenstein's, made the Wittgensteinian-sounding argument that the notion of remembering a dream is nonsensical, since there is no conceivable way of checking the alleged memory. Therefore, Malcolm concluded, dreams are not experiences had while sleeping but merely the propensity to tell weird stories upon awakening.

These are the questions that philosophers have asked about dreams. The ordinary person has rather different concerns. Why do I dream? he wants to know. What is dreaming for? Do my dreams mean anything?



A speculative answer to these latter questions was proposed by Freud, who held that dreams offered the disguised fulfillment of repressed wishes and that the function of dreaming was to keep our sleep from being disturbed by these troublesome desires. But the first empirical breakthrough in dream science came well after Freud, in 1953. That was when Nathaniel Kleitman—the father of sleep research, who died this past August at the age of 104—discovered REM (rapid eye movement) sleep. For periods totaling about two hours each night, Kleitman found, sleepers make jerky eye movements under their closed eyelids; if they are awakened during these periods, they recall having dreams, whereas if they are awakened during non-REM periods, they do not.

Since the discovery of REM sleep, new evidence has shown that we also dream during much of our non-REM sleep. Non-REM dreams tend to be repetitive and thoughtlike, with little imagery—obsessively returning to the suspicion that you left your Filofax somewhere, for example. If non-REM dreams are like neuroses, REM dreams, with their wild conceits and bizarrely stitched-together plots, are more akin to psychoses. Between these two states, there may not be a single moment of our sleep when we are actually dreamless.

It is hard to resist the notion that any activity that occupies as much of our lives as dreaming does must have some sort of evolutionary rationale. (Do other species dream? Some of them certainly do have sleep cycles like ours. The elephant, curiously, sleeps standing up during non-REM periods and then lies down for REM sleep.)

At the moment, there are two prominent—and conflicting—neurobiological theories that attribute adaptive value to dreaming. The Harvard sleep researcher Allan Hobson has hypothesized that the function of dreaming is to fix recent experiences in long-term memory; in other words, we dream about things worth remembering. Francis Crick and Graeme Michison, by contrast, see dreams as a sort of "brainwashing" process in which overlapping memories are eliminated; that is to say, we dream about things worth forgetting.

The most persuasive evolutionary take on dreaming, however, comes from Owen Flanagan, a philosopher at Duke who also holds a professorship there in the department of neurobiology. In his fascinating new book, *Dreaming Souls* (Oxford), Flanagan submits that, while sleep is certainly an evolutionary adaptation, and consciousness probably is, too, consciousness *during* sleep is merely a nonadaptive by-product of the two. "Dreams are the spandrels of sleep," he declares, invoking an evolutionary figure of speech popularized by Stephen Jay Gould and Richard Lewontin. (See page 18.)

On the night shift, the brain renews itself by stockpiling fresh supplies of neurotransmitters for the next day. Flanagan believes that pulses from the brain stem, which are designed to get this restorative work going, activate stored images and thoughts more or less at random. The partly shut-down cerebral cortex, designed to process sensory experience by the light of day, then performs the same function with this chaotic input during sleep. The dreams that result, Flanagan argues, are neither dazzlingly poetic, as Nietzsche claimed, nor deeply meaningful and in need of elaborate interpretation, as Freud thought.

Trying not to be too deflationary, Flanagan maintains that dreams nonetheless have some self-expressive value, for the random thoughts activated are *our* thoughts and the narrative structures are imposed by *our* minds. Perhaps. Yet as we learn more about the neurobiology of dreaming, it gets harder to disagree with the advice of W.H. Auden:

> Should dreams haunt you,
> heed them not,
> for all, both sweet and horrid,
> are jokes in dubious taste,
> too jejune to have truck with.

JIM HOLT

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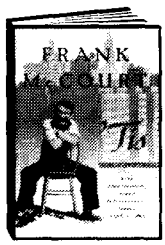
Modern Thoughts & Memoirs



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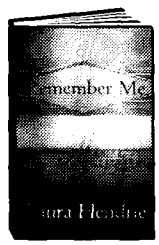

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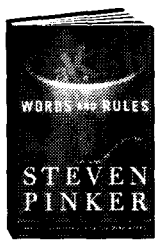

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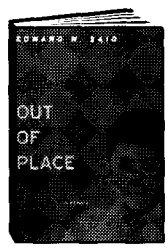

Out of Place

A Memoir

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Out of Place is a story of exile, a narrative of many departures and a celebration of an irrecoverable past. A fatal medical diagnosis convinces Said to leave a record of his life, from where he was born and spent his childhood to his endeavors in the university. This memoir allows us to observe the people who formed him and who enabled him to triumph as one of the most important intellectuals of our time.

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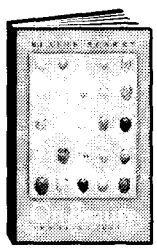

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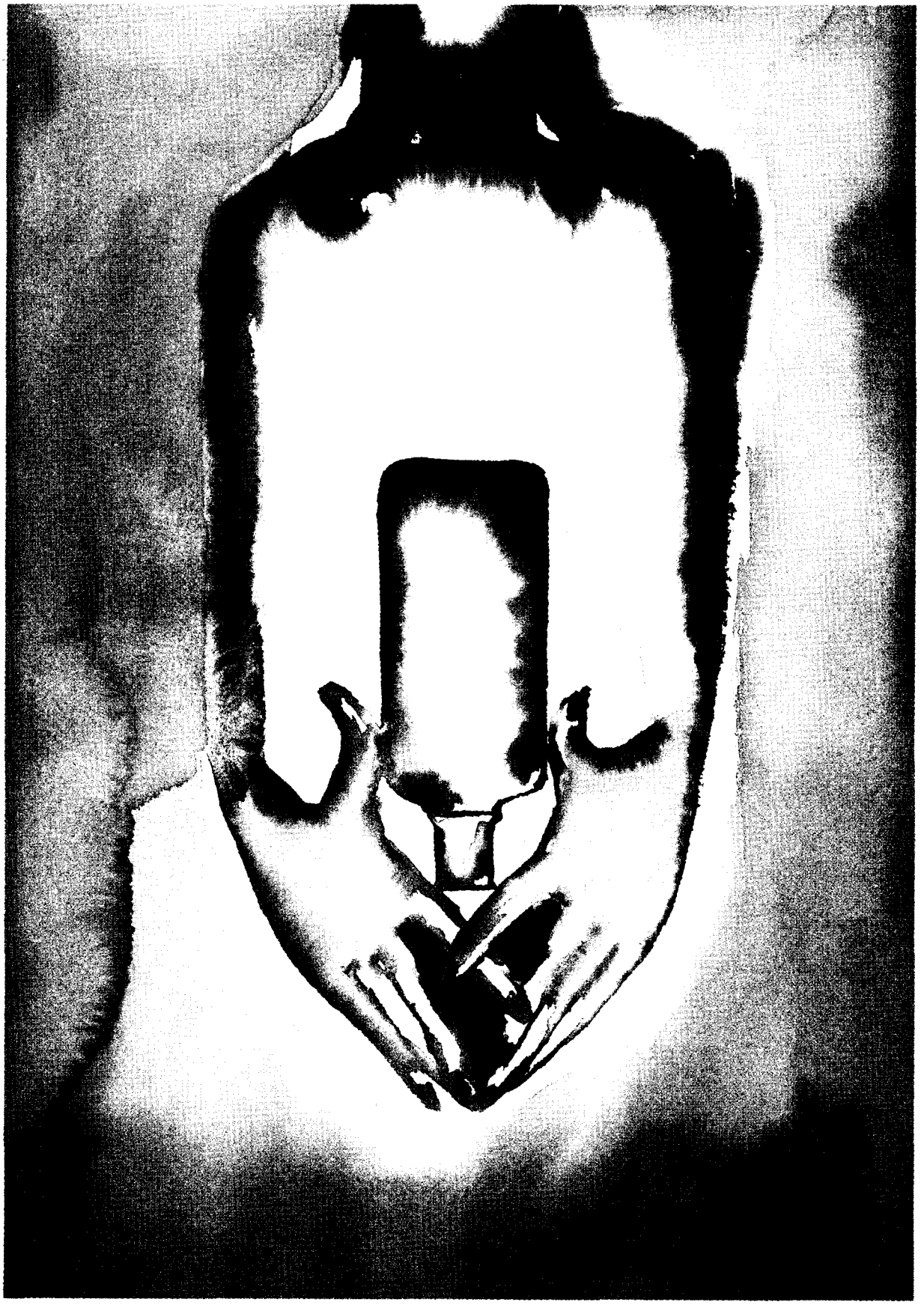

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